

## Children's rights and citizenship values in a book selection for young readers

Maria Pujol Valls<sup>1</sup>; Mariona Graell<sup>2</sup>

Recibido: Septiembre 2021 / Evaluado: Abril 2022 / Aceptado: Octubre 2022

**Abstract.** This study is contextualised in the field of how children's literature can help to spread awareness of children's rights among its readers. It is intended to determine the ethical values most present in a specific corpus and their relationship with children's rights and citizenship education. The **results** and **discussion** break new ground in the literary and social fields because they provide answers to help understand the role of children's literature in a world that needs the engagement of young citizens. The **method** adopted is a convergent parallel mixed one, as it collects and merges quantitative data, obtained from reading 244 fiction and non-fiction books for 0–12-year-olds, and qualitative data by assigning 39 values to the books. The corpus belongs to the Children's Rights Suitcase, a selection by the Rosa Sensat Teachers' Association. This data is then interpreted using a validated data collection instrument. The **introduction** and the theoretical framework are based upon literary cognitive criticism and democratic education to encourage children to participate in society and become critical citizens.

**Keywords:** children's rights; ethical values; citizenship education; children and young people's literature

### [es] Derechos de los niños y valores para la ciudadanía en una selección de libros para jóvenes lectores

**Resumen.** Este estudio se contextualiza en el campo de cómo la literatura infantil puede ayudar a difundir concienciación sobre los derechos de los niños entre sus lectores. Se pretende determinar los valores éticos más presentes en un corpus específico y su relación con los derechos del niño y la educación ciudadana. Los **resultados** y **discusión** abren nuevos caminos en los campos literario y social porque brindan respuestas para ayudar a conocer el rol de la literatura infantil en un mundo que necesita la participación de ciudadanos jóvenes. El **método** adoptado es mixto paralelo convergente, ya que recoge y fusiona datos cuantitativos, obtenidos de la lectura de 244 libros de ficción y no ficción para niños de 0 a 12 años, y datos cualitativos asignando 39 valores a los libros. El corpus pertenece a la Maleta de los Derechos de los Niños, una selección hecha por la Asociación de Maestros Rosa Sensat. Estos datos se interpretan utilizando un instrumento validado de recopilación de datos. La **introducción** y el marco teórico se basan en la crítica cognitiva literaria y la educación democrática para alentar a los niños a participar en la sociedad y convertirse en ciudadanos críticos.

**Palabras clave:** derechos del niño; valores éticos; educación ciudadana; literatura infantil y juvenil.

**Summary.** 1. Introduction. 2. Theoretical framework. 3. Research process. 4. Results. 5. Discussion and conclusions. 6. Disclosure statement. 7. References

**Cómo citar:** Pujol Valls, M. y Graell, M. (2023). Children's rights and citizenship values in a book selection for young readers. *Revista Complutense de Educación*, 34(2), 243-252.

## 1. Introduction

'I wish to emphasize that in our quest to develop critical readers we do not lose sight of the pleasure that can be gained from these books' argues Mallan (1999, pp. 1–2) when analysing three picture books, considering the relation between their aesthetic and literary properties and their social and political implications. It is necessary to take into account, on one hand, the need to present to young readers literary artistic expressions that can offer delight (Nodelman & Reimer, 2002) and, on the other, the fact that children's literature often defends values, norms and attitudes (Lluch, 2003). This research seeks to approach children's books from an innovative perspective because it sheds some light on the ethical values (Cortina, 2007) present in some specific books. This study intends to determine the ethical values present in a selection of books that are considered capable of

<sup>1</sup> Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (España).

E-mail: [mpujolv@uic.es](mailto:mpujolv@uic.es)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6314-4675>

<sup>2</sup> Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (España).

E-mail: [mgraell@uic.es](mailto:mgraell@uic.es)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9776-8830>

stimulating citizenship education, children's rights awareness, and political engagement. In every educational action, values can permeate in boys and girls (Puig, 2021). Books can help to work on values through the reflection proposed by the teachers. If teachers are to recommend a book to a child, they need to be aware of the educative load and the values that it can convey to help ensure children's rights. This research proposes some values linked to children's rights obtained from a list of selected books. Thus, for the first time, a list of values related to children's rights is offered, which can help define the criteria for choosing books.

Developing research with this aim is rather new because of its educational perspective on topics like values in education, citizenship, literature and children's rights. Some articles have already been published about similar topics. In 2014, the editors of *The Lion and the Unicorn* felt the need to produce a special issue about children's literature and children's rights with a 'new, vibrant perspective in the field of children's literature studies' (Saguisag & Prickett, 2016, p. V). In this issue, which would have been launched in 2016, the publishers were focussed on 'challenging scholars to investigate and interrogate children's literature in light of children's right discourses' (p. V). Moreover, in the same period, other authors also stated that 'not only does children literature have the potential to create opportunities for children to think about human rights, but children's stories provide adults [...] an opportunity to enrich their understanding of the rights of children' (Todres & Higinbotham, 2015, p. 17). In a constantly changing and complex world, the development of social and emotional skills as well as values is necessary in order to advance a shared respect for human dignity (OECD, 2018). It is therefore the right time to ascertain the beneficial role that children's literature can play in facilitating citizenship education, political engagement, and an awareness of children's rights in particular. This study is answering Fecho and Allen's (2003) call to recognise the social imperatives and to work on them in the classroom.

They state that 'because the uglier aspects of modern society such as racism, classism, and sexism don't get discussed in complicated ways in many classrooms, there is a tendency to believe that these societal monsters also don't exist [out] there. [...] There is a clear and immediate need for insight into the way social issues transact with literacy classrooms' (p. 233). Some of these social aspects are those addressed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, such as climate change, world health or hunger (United Nations, 2015). It is necessary that young people have access to literary resources that will help them understand present society and, for example, give meaning to contemporary social movements such as #Metoo, Black Lives Matter or #FridaysForFuture, which advance the exploration of ways of reporting and changing these societal monsters. There is debate as to whether children, especially those of pre-school age, should be aware of the world's problems (Hirst & Wilkinson 2022). Zurbano (2001) argues that, given the urgent need to spread peace and harmony everywhere, children in early childhood education should be educated for coexistence without speaking directly to them about wars, violence and human rights violations. In a slightly different way, positions such as those of Burnouf (2004) and Elliott (2010), among many others, maintain that it is necessary for children to be considered and act as global citizens. For this reason, authors such as Christensen (2021) offer tools to detect the degree of agency that is awarded to young readers in literary works aimed at them.

The corpus explored belongs to a selection of children's books that can be related to children's rights. This list was created by the Rosa Sensat Teachers' Association (Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat, 2018), from Barcelona, and it includes over 250 titles. This is one of the most influential associations in the educational world of the last 50 years in Catalonia. It has been recognized for its concern for democracy and participation from an educational point of view (Simó & Feu, 2015).

The method used is a convergent parallel mixed one because it collects and merges quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data is obtained from reading a selection of fiction and non-fiction books for 0–12-year-olds. Qualitative data comes from assigning 39 values to these books. This data is then interpreted using a validated data collection instrument. The theoretical framework is based upon literary cognitive criticism and democratic education to encourage children to participate in society and become critical citizens.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. The relationship between human rights, children's rights, and democratic education

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 was established to recognise the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, as this is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world (UN General Assembly, 1948). It was a revolution in upholding the dignity of human beings and it was mainly aimed at the adult population. However, in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN General Assembly, 1989) was approved by the United Nations—inspired in the non-binding Declaration of the Rights of the Child (UN General Assembly, 1959). It happened because the way children were viewed and treated had changed. They were now thought of as human beings with a distinct set of rights instead of passive recipients of care and charity, and they needed a specific treaty. The unprecedented acceptance of the Convention clearly shows a comprehensive global commitment to progress in children's

rights. This Convention defined the rights that every child should have through an agreement with 54 articles. With it, children were granted the status of individuals protected by law; in other words, they were now active citizens (Trilla & Novella, 2001). Citizens who do not know their rights do not know their duties either (Ruiz Rodríguez, 2011). They are expected to be civic, and citizenship is the set of qualities that allow citizens to live in the city—that is, live in a community, respecting the rules of peaceful coexistence, accepting the rules of democracy and fundamental rights or constitutional values (Tonucci & Rissotto, 2001). As Gutmann (1987) states, children must not only learn to behave in schools but also to think critically about these institutions if they are expected to live in accordance with the democratic ideal of sharing sovereignty as citizens. She also argues that people who are governed only by habit are unable to build a society of critical citizens. Therefore, a child who has been trained to be critical, for example through children's literature, empowers critical citizenship. It is necessary to teach citizens to think for themselves—that is, to be autonomous—in order to be able to make life a more democratic experience (Puig, 2021; Puig & Martín, 2014). For these reasons, the professional efficacy of educators depends on their awareness of values brought into play in educational situations. When the values practised in class are democratic, children have more opportunities to increase their capacity for deliberation and participation in reproducing social consciousness (Dewey, 1919). As Mesa (2019) states, the incorporation of citizenship in the educational field provides opportunities to obtain solutions and alternatives to social problems. This is a tool that allows awareness and transformation of social justice and solidarity. A democracy cannot function without prepared citizens, who know how to autonomously discern between individualism and the common good. For this, a process aimed at educating in values about the common good is necessary (Pérez Pérez, 2016) and it can make children aware of their rights. It has been argued that students must develop the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilling lives, make informed decisions and respond to challenges. This is possible through education for sustainable development and citizenship education, as well as human rights education (Ibarra Figueroa & Calderón Leyton, 2021, UNESCO, 2018) and children's rights education.

## 2.2 Literature and education as an intricate pairing

The pairing of education and children's literature offers many opportunities for critical citizenship education. To explore this, the mental impact of children's fiction on readers needs to be addressed. In the past, this issue has been widely examined (Luch, 2003; Nikolajeva, 2014, 2015). Regarding picture books in particular, Mallan (1999) claims that they 'have the potential to stimulate inquiry into their content and form which may result in the reader making a series of intellectual, emotional, and perceptual shifts' (p. 3) so they can be used to trigger discussion, reflection, and action. This is possible because 'picture books communicate a view of the world, albeit a constructed view, which at once discloses and obscures political and social viewpoints' (p. 5). Despite the message that a picture book can carry, its influence on children does not only depend on the intentions of the teachers that offer the books but also on the readers' lives, experiences and symbolic references.

Besides the fact that the influence of a book on readers can depend on their personal and literary background, why does literature have the power to impact on the reader? Cognitive science has approached this issue and authors such as Oatley (2016) have explored it through the theory of the mind. When reviewing cognitive studies, he shows that 'reading of fiction was found to improve social understanding' (p. 620). The cognitive critic Maria Nikolajeva (2014) has stated that literature 'challenges its audiences cognitively and affectively, stimulating attention, imagination, memory, inference-making, empathy, and all other elements of mental processes' (p. 227). Because of its power, children and young adult literature has been repeatedly subordinated to educational and moralising goals. Predictably, it has historically been related to pedagogical aims (Nikolajeva, 2015). However, in the last decades, the discussion about the aims of this genre has caused controversy because possible pedagogical aspects of books for young readers can be seen in different ways. For example, with regard to the more open defence of didactics in children and young adult literature, Nodelman and Reimer (2002) show that many adults who think that the main aim of children's literature is to educate, make children learn to find morality in it. These authors allege that readers may believe all stories are parables or fables if they have been taught to interpret them only as messages that will guide them in life.

Nikolajeva (2014) draws a clear distinction between the educative and aesthetic use of children's literature: 'Although children's literature has been extensively used as an education implement, this does not exclude or preclude its parallel use as a source of aesthetic pleasure. Moreover, pleasure makes acquisition of knowledge more efficient' (p. 226). But where is the boundary between the explicit didactic purpose of writers and their inevitable vision of the world? Hunt (1994) clarifies that books for young readers are more likely to offer moral teaching because they tell more than they show, and they are able to manipulate more easily than books for adults. Therefore, in children's literature, education should be a secondary effect of reading and not so much an aim. The main aim of literature for young readers should be to make children enjoy reading even though it may be educational to some extent (Chambers, 1993). That is, that literature is not instrumentalised (Cervera, 1991). The selection of books by Rosa Sensat Teachers' Association is analysed considering this conception of children and young adult literature.

It has been claimed that stories dealing with children's rights might make readers aware of them, and thus respect them, even causing social change. For example, Honeyman (2016) detected that young characters with cancer portrayed in children's books are often denied the right to know about and participate in the decision taking regarding their illness. She defends that these books will not help child patients recognise their rights, whereas the few books that present the opposite situation can help readers reinforce their rights. Hope (2008) also maintained that children reading books on the topic of migration could help to change their view on some stereotypes, while it could also increase their understanding of refugees' experiences and other aspects about migration. In the same line, Superle designs a child-centered critical approach to children's literature keeping in mind that "literary texts can aid in preparing the groundwork for a more empathetic and empowered childhood that helps enable children to be participants in their lives and literature, rather than relegated to the status of passive, protected recipients" (Superle, 2016, 151). In this way, literature allows children to be stimulated cognitively, but also emotionally, in the text-reader relationship (Chambers, 1993, Bueno, 2021).

As Nikolajeva (2012) argues, literature facilitates this involvement thanks to emotions.

Fiction creates situations in which emotions are simulated; we engage with literary characters' emotions because our brain can, through mirror neurons, simulate other people's goals in the same manner as it can simulate our own goals. [...] Cognitive criticism purports that the reason we can engage with fictive characters is because of the connections between the mediated experience of the text and emotional memories stored in the brain. (p. 276)

It has even been argued that children who are exposed to stories set in contexts different from theirs are invited to understand and analyse their own circumstances and, therefore, are more likely to see their own culture and experiences from another point of view (Gopalakrishnan, 2011). Nikolajeva (2012) argues that literature offers them opportunities to construct their identity as citizens.

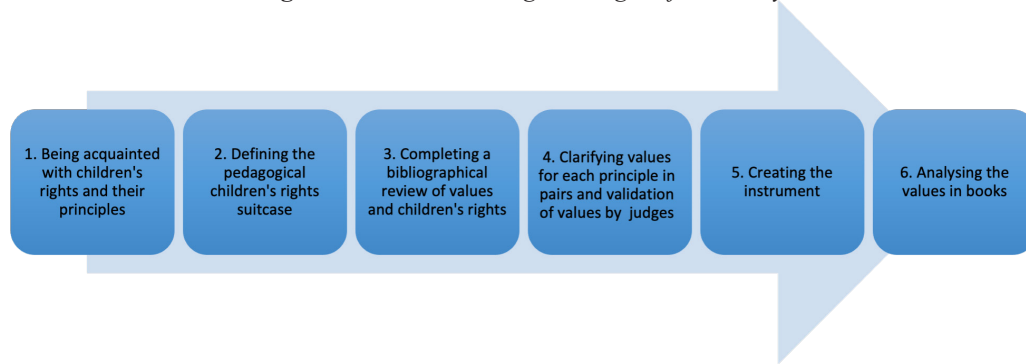
Regarding the development of children's critical thinking, evidence has been provided that literature can help readers develop their critical sense (Portell, 2004). This also applies to young readers because children are natural critics as they are very young, if they are really interested in a topic and if they find the means to express themselves (Chambers, 1993).

In order to give children the chance to access literature and learn how to read and enjoy it, the role of mediators such as librarians is fundamental. This is why entities like Rosa Sensat Teachers' Association has been undertaking this task since its foundation in 1965. This association is a movement that works for the improvement of education by reforming teaching methods. One of its aims is to publish and edit materials, magazines, books in different formats, as a way of spreading pedagogical practices and theories (Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat, n.d). This has often been achieved thanks to the work of its Children's and Young People's Library. This library has carried out several book selections—or *suitcases*—based on specific topics, which can be borrowed by schools. The aim of these selections is to promote reading, debate, and education in preschool and primary education. One suitcase is devoted to fiction and some non-fiction books that can be related to children's rights. Adults are supposed to provide security and protection for children but this rule is continually broken (Martín & López-Doria, 2022; Martín, 2008; Cuso, 1995). For this reason, this library intends to offer a selection of books that teachers can use. They can find it useful when facing the challenge of bring up children who need to be able to read, to look, to feel, to think and to speak to build their own democratic discourse, showing more solidarity, empathy and critical faculties (Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat, 2018). Each book is a tool for children to find out more about a specific aspect of their rights, focusing on their personal and social development. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child became the basis for it. It includes 244 fiction and non-fiction books and it is organised around 11 principles.

### 3. Research process

This study has used convergent parallel mixed methods. It consists of a form of mixed methods in which the researcher converges or merges quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. In this design, the investigator typically collects both forms of data at roughly the same time and then integrates the information in the interpretation of the overall results. Contradictions or incongruent findings are explained or further probed in this design. The key idea is to collect both forms of data using the same or parallel variables, constructs, or concepts (Creswell, 2014). The variables of this research are the principles of the Rights of the Child, the values and the books. Values are attributed to the principles by adopting the method of value clarification (Puig & Martín, 2007). Books are analysed by connecting the content found in their text and illustrations with the values that are implicit in them. The link between principles and books is provided by the values, which can be quantified by means of a data collection tool. Six stages have been completed (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** *The methodological stages of this study.*

Source: the authors

Stage 1. Being acquainted with children's rights and their principles: the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child from 1959 was selected for the study of the declaration of children's rights and principles. Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989 is a legally binding treaty and the Declaration from 1959 is not, this research follows the older document because the principles are the essence of the Convention, while the of the Declaration in 10 principles is easier to manage than the Convention's 54 articles. However, the Convention is also used in this research because articles 12–17 cover children's right to express their opinion, to be listened to, and to be protected from interference in their private lives, and these rights did not appear so clearly in the Declaration. 11 principles which defined children's rights were selected: equality and non-discrimination; protection and integral development; identity, name, and nationality; social security; attention to special needs; love and family; education; the first ones concerning protection and relief; non-exploitation; education in friendship, peace and fraternity; and capacity to progress and to able to express themselves and be heard.

Stage 2. Defining the pedagogical children's rights suitcase: the pedagogical children's rights suitcase was created after the first stage. It was aimed at early education and primary school children (0–12 years old). A total of 244 fiction books were included in the 11 principles. For this research, an extra block of 20 knowledge books originally belonging to the suitcase was not taken into account as these books had a different artistic intention. The selection was made by a team of experts from Rosa Sensat Teachers' Association, with more than 30 years' experience in assessing children's books. The criteria agreed by these experts comprise essential elements such as the aesthetic quality of the text and the paratexts, the relationship between verbal and visual components, the typology, sequence, and coherence of the illustrations, the structure and style of the story, the narrative temporality and intertextual narratives (Lluch, 2009), as well as the suitability of the book for the readers' age and the appropriateness of the topic according to the principles.

The quality of the books was a *sine qua non* for including the titles in the suitcase, as one of the main purposes of this selection was to promote literature among children (Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat, 2018). Nikolajeva (2015) classifies different approaches to analysing children's literature: manipulating it, seeing it as functional, and, finally, seeing it as literature (Nikolajeva 2015). This step of the research was framed by following Nikolajeva's third classification, that is, a purely literary criterion or seeing the books as works of art. Different numbers of books are included in each principle (Table 1).

**Table 1.** *Children's rights and number of books.*

Principles	Number of books
1. Equality and non-discrimination	15
2. Protection and integral development	14
3. Identity, name, and nationality	30
4. Social security	29
5. Attention to special needs	13
6. Love and family	25
7. Education	20
8. The first ones concerning protection and relief	32
9. Non-exploitation	21
10. Education in friendship, peace, and fraternity	20
11. Capacity to progress and to be able to express themselves and be heard	25

Source: the authors

Stage 3. Completing a bibliographical review of values and children's rights: in a bibliographical search with the combination of the following descriptors: 'children's values and rights'; 'children's rights analysis'; 'values and children', in search engines from Eric, Web of Science and Scopus, no articles about the categorization of values in children's rights were found. For this reason, it was necessary to clarify the values for each principle in the next step.

Stage 4. Clarifying values for each principle in pairs and validation of the values by judges (an expert in values education, one in children's rights and one in children's literature): the value clarification methodology (Puig & Martin, 2007) is the one that allows the clarification of the values that are implicit in each principle through its definition. It consists of the two authors from this article discussing the relationship between values selected by Puig and Martin (2007, p. 38) as ethical values, and principles from the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. After that, every researcher individually chooses the values that define each principle, and then they share, compare and specify these values. The outcome is validated by three experts in children's rights, ethical values and children's literature. The result of this methodological process is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *Principles and values.*

Principles	Values
1. Equality and non-discrimination	respect, dignity, impartiality, integrity, tolerance, equity, equality, difference
2. Protection and integral development	dignity, quality of life, security, caution, responsibility, self-sufficiency, integrity
3. Identity, name, and nationality	security, self-sufficiency, participation, quality of life, patriotism, dignity
4. Social security	health, leisure, assistance, quality of life, dignity, balance, security, life
5. Attention to special needs	authenticity, self-sufficiency, justice, assistance, quality of life, dignity, respect, health, security, equity, difference, inclusion
6. Love and family	self-sufficiency, common good, sensitivity, harmony, balance, quality of life, happiness, integrity, security
7. Education	critical sense, sense of duty, responsibility, leisure, democracy, dialogue, participation, competence, knowledge, creativity, freedom, difference, respect
8. The first ones concerning protection and relief	assistance, dialogue, cooperation, respect, caution, dignity, integrity, security, solidarity, quality of life
9. Non-exploitation	integrity, dignity, respect, security, justice, health
10. Education in friendship, peace and fraternity	difference, dignity, integrity, peace, friendship, tolerance, harmony, generosity, altruism, respect, sense of duty
11. Capacity to progress and to be able to express themselves and be heard and be heard	participation, dialogue, self-sufficiency, critical sense, freedom, knowledge, security, integrity

Source: the authors

Stage 5. Creating the instrument: this evaluation instrument helps obtain the data in an organised way and it also makes it possible to count the values that appear in each principle. Each principle includes the selected books from the pedagogical suitcase and the specific values according to the definition of the principle. On reading the books, three outstanding values are selected. The instrument was a grid, designed as follows. The top row included the 39 values, one in each box. The first column on the left included the number and name of the 11 principles of children's rights. In the second and third column, the authors and titles of the books were listed so each author and title occupied one box. They were grouped beside the principle where they belonged. By designing the grid in such a way, the researchers were able to indicate the three values found in each book. Moreover, before starting the analysis, the values that were expected to be found in each principle were highlighted.

Stage 6. Analysing the values in the books: this stage of the research follows a functional, pragmatic or pedagogical view of children's literature (Nikolajeva, 2015). This is due to the fact that the contents and the message intended to be transmitted to readers are being analysed. Bearing in mind that the second stage—defining the pedagogical suitcase of children's rights—follows a theoretical approach, this study adopts a mixed methodology from a literary point of view, including both a pragmatic and a theoretical approach.

## 4. Results

After analyzing the books to extract the values attached to each of the principles (stage 6), the data corresponding to the objective set was obtained. This had the aim of verifying the suitability of the Rosa Sensat suitcase as a resource for teaching citizenship values and for children to become aware of their rights. Different aspects of relevance affecting the 244 books in this selection and the 39 chosen values can therefore be found.

The values selected in the books are present on two levels: a value may be found in the story or the characters might act because of it or because they lack it. These values are therefore not always displayed as positive and are sometimes neglected.

All 39 values that define the 11 principles have been applied to some extent. As shown in Table 3, the 10 values appearing most often in the suitcase are, in descending order: *security*, *friendship*, *dignity*, *difference*, *respect*, *quality of life*, *assistance*, *freedom*, *integrity*, and *self-sufficiency*. These are values that are repeated continuously throughout the 244 books, although they are not always present in all principles. Table 3 is organised in three columns. In the first column, the most recurring values are presented; the second column shows the number of times the values appear in the suitcase books; the third column includes the number of principles in which these values appear according to the blocks and the selection of the books.

**Table 3.** *Predominant values.*

Value	Count	Recurrence by principle
security	64	10 principles
friendship	48	10 principles
dignity	47	9 principles
difference	43	10 principles
respect	41	9 principles
quality of life	38	no recurrence
assistance	33	no recurrence
freedom	31	no recurrence
integrity	29	10 principles
self-sufficiency	25	9 principles
Total: 39 values	Total: 244 books	

Source: the authors

As this research required finding the most outstanding values in the suitcase, there had to be a cut-off point in the list of 39 values. These values were ordered from least to greatest presence throughout the 244 books. In order to do this, it was decided to establish two criteria.

The values (Table 3) that were considered the most important were those detected in all the books in the suitcase, at least as the predominant value in 9 or 10 principles. Those present in 9 or 10 principles were *security*, *friendship*, *dignity*, *difference*, *respect*, *quality of life*, *assistance*, *freedom*, *integrity*, and *self-sufficiency*). Among these 10 resulting values, the one that was least present in the total of 244 books was found: this was *self-sufficiency*, detected in 25 books. Thus, the values present in 25 or more books of the entire suitcase were considered to be the outstanding ones. Applying this criterion, 10 values were considered to be most outstanding, although some of them were recurrent (*self-sufficiency*, *integrity*, *respect*, *difference*, *dignity*, *friendship*, and *security*) and others were not (*freedom*, *assistance* and *quality of life*). The presence of these 10 outstanding values could vary substantially: *self-sufficiency* is in 25 books and in nine of the principles, and *security* is in 64 books and in 10 principles. These results show that values can be found across some principles even if their presence in books from each principle is slight. Even so, the value prevailing over all the others both in computation and in recurrence was *security*.

Of the 10 values that emerged, seven cut across more principles than the others: the four that appear in 10 of the 11 principles are *security*, *friendship*, *difference*, and *integrity*. And the three that come out in nine of the 11 principles are *self-sufficiency*, *respect*, and *dignity*.

Regarding the values that appear in 10 of the 11 principles, *security* is not present in the 10th principle—friendship, peace, and fraternity. *Integrity* does not appear in the 7th principle—education. *Difference* is not present in the 2nd principle—protection and integral development. And *friendship* does not appear in the 1st principle—equality and non-discrimination. In relation to the values that appear in nine of the 11 principles, *self-sufficiency* is not outstanding in the 1st principle—non-discrimination—nor the 3rd principle—identity, name, and nationality. *Dignity* does not appear in the 6th principle—love and family—or the 10th principle—

friendship, peace, and fraternity. And respect is not found in the 2nd principle—protection and integral development—nor the 6th principle—love and family.

In order to illustrate the results, an example of a book where the value of security is identified can be given: Tomi Ungerer's (1961) *The Three Robbers*. In this story, three highwaymen decide to change their lives when they meet an orphan girl travelling alone. They buy a castle and offer destitute, orphaned children a home to provide them with security. The three bandits initially generate insecurity, but they change when faced with a girl who, like them, is also socially excluded. They become people who provide a secure space for those who do not have one.

It can be determined that the cross-sectional values are, in particular, those that appear in almost all the principles: 10 out of the 11. The value that is not present in one of the principles would not be expected to be included in it. This prediction of the values that would be present in each principle was made before carrying out the analysis. Of the seven values that have emerged as frequent in the principles, two were predicted to be frequent in principles where they have not, in fact, appeared. These are *self-sufficiency*, expected to be found in the 3<sup>rd</sup> principle—identity, name, and nationality—and *dignity*, expected in the 10<sup>th</sup> principle—friendship, peace, and fraternity.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

The results of this research show that, of the 39 chosen values, 10 of them stand out because of the way they cut across most of the principles. The two values prevailing over all the others, both because of the number of books in which they have been found and the number of principles where they are applied, are the values of security and friendship. The value of security is present in 64 books out of 244, and in 10 principles out of a total of 11. The value of friendship is present in 48 books and 10 principles. Based on the most important value, which is security, it can be said that the books from the suitcase are closely linked to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of the Child because they state that children need to develop and be educated in conditions of peace and security. Moreover, if they do not feel safe, they cannot develop. Meanwhile, the value of friendship allows children to develop their social skills, and to discover their surroundings, participating in this with their peers. The crucial role of friendship in children's developmental periods and the way social relationships can meet children's interpersonal needs has been upheld since Sullivan's theory (1953).

By looking at the results as a whole, the fact that all the values chosen have appeared to some extent in one of the principles demonstrates that the Children's Rights suitcase, put together by the Rosa Sensat Teachers' Association, can be a resource for working on democratic values and building critical citizenship in the classroom. These are values that have emerged in the principles of the Rights of the Child through the analysis of books—which present social problems—and which invite the reader to work on education in values and citizenship.

After analysing the 244 books, the results allow us to confirm that children's literature transmits values linked to the children's rights. The values that stand out are *security*, *friendship*, *difference*, and *integrity*. Children's literature has the ability to convey, through art, values that will safeguard future citizens. Exposure to these books, as a pedagogical practice, allows to teach them to think for themselves (Puig, 2021) and invite them to become more autonomous and aware of the world around them. It can be said that schools borrowing this suitcase have a selection of books that help them work on certain values at their disposal as well as encouraging critical and self-governing citizens. This suitcase offers such a wide variety of titles that teachers and children have the freedom to choose the books they like the most. By reading these books, boys and girls may find alternatives in life situations that would not suggest themselves without these readings (Gopalakrishnan, 2011) because they internalize values that appear in the books. Thanks to this suitcase, children have the opportunity to recognize and reflect on values such as security, friendship, dignity, difference and respect.

It can be concluded that the suitcase of 244 books is a useful resource to promote children's rights and desirable citizenship values. It is an effective tool thanks to its creative components because literature has the ability to question readers, influence their way of seeing the world and develop their critical sense. The fact that the choice of books has followed aesthetic criteria makes it easy for readers to enjoy reading and, therefore, feel closer to the issues addressed in the stories.

The results of this study allow to reflect on the values that children can internalise through the reading of the suitcase books. Knowing what values are implicit in the stories makes it easier for the teacher to work on them in the classroom in greater depth from now on. One possible way to follow this line of research is to study the application of this suitcase in various classrooms and see the impact that books generate on readers, and to be able to observe how values emerge. It would follow Deszcz-Tryhubczak's proposal of expanding children's voices in literary studies in order to develop more advanced research and also respect children's power, which has often been diminished (2016). A possible investigation might be able to prove the impact of Rosa Sensat's



suitcase on readers' values and their awareness of children's rights. The suitcase, in short, is a material with which teachers can lead dialogue.

Some limitations can be found in this research. On the one hand, the results of this analysis are at a theoretical level. It has not been possible to verify in practice how children assume values through books. However, this study is a first approach to this question and can be a working tool for educators. On the other hand, the results have not been shared with the educators. In other words, it is not known how the educators see the application of the values detected in the books in the classroom because this is a first phase of the research. And it is also not known how the reading and understanding of this corpus would be applied in the classroom. This task is part of a later phase of the research.

## 6. Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## 7. References

- Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat. (2018). Coneix la maleta dels drets dels infants! <https://www.rosasensat.org/coneix-la-maleta-dels-drets-dels-infants/>
- Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat. (n.d). Qui som. Available at <https://www.rosasensat.org/lassociacio/qui-som/>
- Bueno, D. (2021). La neurociencia como fundamento de la educación emocional. *Revista internacional de educación emocional y bienestar*, 1(1), 47–61. <https://doi.org/10.48102/rieib.2021.1.1.6>
- Burnouf, L. (2004). Global awareness and perspectives in global education. *Canadian Social Studies*, 38(3), 1–12. Available at <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1073942>
- Cervera, J. (1991). *Teoría de la literatura infantil*. Mensajero.
- Chambers, A. (1993). *Tell me*. Stenhouse Publishers.
- Cortina, A. (2007). Ética de la razón cordial. Educar en la ciudadanía del siglo XXI. Ediciones Nobel.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. Sage Publications.
- Christensen, N. (2021). Agency. In P. Nel, L. Paul & N. Christensen (Eds.), *Keywords for Children's Literature* (2nd ed., pp. 10–12). New York University Press.
- Cusó, M. (1995) At risk childhood and abused childhood, *Comunicación, Lenguaje y Educación*, 7(3), 87-96. <https://doi.org/10.1174/021470395321341078>.
- Dewey, J. (1919). *Education and Democracy*. Macmillan.
- Deszcz-Tryhubczak, J. (2016). Using Literary Criticism for Children's Rights: Toward a Participatory Research Model of Children's Literature Studies. *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 40(2), 215–231. doi: [10.1353/uni.2016.0012](https://doi.org/10.1353/uni.2016.0012).
- Elliott, S. (2010). Essential, not optional: Education for sustainability in early childhood centres. *Exchange: The Early Childhood Leaders' Magazine*, 192, 34–37. Available at: <https://www.exchangepress.com/library/5019234.pdf>
- Fecho, B. & Allen, J. (2003). Teacher inquiry into literacy, social justice and power. In J. Flood et al. (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts* (pp. 232–246). Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Gopalakrishnan, A. (2011). *Multicultural Children's Literature: A Critical Issues Approach*. Sage.
- Gutmann, A. (1987). *Democracy Education*. Princeton University Press.
- Hirst, N. J. & Wilkinson, C. (2022). Student authors, children's literature and Early Childhood Education for Sustainability: Findings from a pedagogic research project. *International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental. Education*, 9(1), 40–57. Available at: <https://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/16257>
- Honeyman, S. E. (2016). Lies We Tell Sick Children: Mutual Pretense and Uninformed Consent in Cancer Narratives. *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 40(2), 179–195. doi: [10.1353/uni.2016.0021](https://doi.org/10.1353/uni.2016.0021)
- Hope, J. (2008). One Day We had to Run: The Development of the Refugee Identity in Children's Literature and its Function in Education. *Children's Literature in Education*, 39, 295–304. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-008-9072-x>
- Hunt, P. (1994). *An Introduction to Children's Literature*. Oxford University Press.
- Ibarra Figueroa, W. & Calderon Leyton, E. (2022). Educación para la ciudadanía global. *Acta Scientiarum. Education*, 44 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1174/021470395321341078>.
- Lluch, G. (2003). *Análisis de narrativas infantiles y juveniles*. Ediciones de Castilla-La Mancha.
- Lluch, G. (2009). Dades per a l'anàlisi de narratives per al lector infantil i juvenil. *Caplletra. Revista Internacional de Filologia*, 46, 121–148. Available at: <https://raco.cat/index.php/Caplletra/article/view/275913>
- Mallan, K. (1999). Reading(s) beneath the surface: Using picture books to develop a critical aesthetics. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 23(1), 11–21. Available <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/ielapa.220561036798189>
- Mesa, M. (2019) La educación para la Ciudadanía Global: Una apuesta por la Democracia. *Revista para la justicia social*, 8 (1), 15–26. <https://doi.org/10.15366/riejs2019.8.1.001>
- Martín, X. & Lopez-Doria, M. (2022). *Entornos que capacitan: Intervención con adolescentes y jóvenes en riesgo de exclusión social*. Narcea.

- Martín, X. (2008). *Descados. Una pedagogía para adolescentes inadaptados*. Octaedro.
- Nikolajeva, M. (2012). Reading Other People's Minds Through Word and Image. *Children's Literature in Education*, 43, 273–291. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-012-9163-6>
- Nikolajeva, M. (2014). *Reading for Learning: Cognitive Approaches to Children's Literature*. John Benjamins.
- Nikolajeva, M. (2015). *Children's literature comes of age: toward a new aesthetic*. Routledge.
- Nodelman, P. & Reimer, M. (2002). *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Oatley, K. (2016). Fiction: Simulation of social worlds. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 29(8), 618–628. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2016.06.002>
- OECD (2018). *Preparing our youth for an inclusive and sustainable world: the OECD PISA global competence framework*. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Available at <https://goo.gl/q5U6YL>
- Pérez Pérez, C. P. (2016). *Educación en valores para la ciudadanía*. Desclee de Brouwer.
- Portell, J. (2004). *M'agrada llegir. Com fer els teus fills lectors*. Ara llibres.
- Puig, J. M. (2021). *Pedagogía de la acción común*. Graó.
- Puig, J. M. & Martín, X. (2007). *Las siete competencias básicas para educar en valores*. Graó.
- Puig, J. M. & Martín, X. (2014). *Competencia en autonomía e iniciativa personal*. Alianza Editorial
- Ruiz Rodríguez, V. (2011). Derechos humanos y deberes. *En-claves del pensamiento*, 5(10), 89–103. Available at [http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1870-879X2011000200006&lng=es&tlng=](http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1870-879X2011000200006&lng=es&tlng=)
- Saguisag, L. & Prickett, M. B. (2016). Introduction: Children's Rights and Children's Literature. *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 40(2), v–xii. doi:10.1353/uni.2016.0013.
- Simó, N. & Feu, J. (2015). L'educació democràtica a les escoles d'estiu de l'Associació de Mestres Rosa Sensat (1966-2008). *Educació i Història: Revista d'Història de l'Educació*, 25, 177-209. <https://doi.org/10.2436/20.3009.01.147>
- Sullivan, H. S. (1953). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. Norton.
- Superle, M. (2016). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: At the Core of a Child Centered Critical Approach to Children's Literature. *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 40(2), 144–162. doi:10.1353/uni.2016.0017.
- Todres, J. & Higinbotham, S. (2015). *Human rights in children's literature: Imagination and the narrative of law*. Oxford University Press.
- Tonucci, F. & Rissotto, A. (2001). Why do we need children's participation? The importance of children's participation in changing the city. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 11(6), 407–419. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.641>
- Trilla, J. & Novella, A. (2001). Educación y participación social de la infancia. *Revista Iberoamericana De Educación*, 26, 137–164. <https://doi.org/10.35362/rie260982>
- UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III), available at: [www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3712c.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3712c.html)
- UN General Assembly, *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, 20 November 1959, A/RES/1386(XIV), available at: [www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b38e3.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b38e3.html)
- UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 20 November 1989, United Nations, Treaty Series, 1577, available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b38f0.html>
- UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1, available at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57b6e3e44.html>
- UNESCO (2018). *Preparing teachers for global citizenship education: a template*. Unesco.
- Ungerer, T. (1961). *The Three Robbers*. Methuen & Co.
- Zurbano, J. L. (2001). *Educación para la convivencia y para la paz*. Gobierno de Navarra.