

## Chapter III

### Margin to Mainstream: Miles of Education

The present chapter, titled "Margin to Mainstream: Miles of Education," delves into Jean Little's exploration of immigration, adaptation, social inclusion, and human relationships through the character of Anna Solden in her novels, *From Anna* and *Listen for the Singing*. These literary works vividly portray the challenges faced by Anna, a character with disabilities, and her family following their migration from Germany to Canada. As highlighted in the article "Migration and Health" on the *Migration Data Portal*, the process of migration can significantly impact both physical and mental well-being, a reality especially pertinent for individuals with disabilities navigating the transitions to a new environment. This study is specifically focused on analysing the narratives of *From Anna* and *Listen for the Singing*, with a central emphasis on Anna's experiences, familial dynamics, and the broader societal context, all within the sphere of education. Through this exploration, the aim is to unravel the complexities of Anna's journey from the margins of society to the mainstream educational landscape, traversing miles of challenges and opportunities along the way.

The social model of disability emphasises societal barriers as primary contributors to disability, highlighting the need for inclusive education. Perspectives on inclusive education vary, as Eagly and Chaiken in *Inclusion, Disability, and Culture* note differing reactions—"some individuals may feel pessimistic while others express hope and optimism" (50). Kilgore et al. from *Inclusion, Disability, and Culture* identify key factors pivotal in fostering inclusive education, emphasising "democratic governance, collaborative culture, professional growth, supportive leadership, and equity concerns" (41). These aspects underscore the imperative of addressing barriers within educational systems to facilitate inclusive learning environments.

Education's role in improving the quality of life for disabled individuals is a central theme in scholarly discourse. Tom Shakespeare in *Disability Rights and Wrongs* highlights the potential enhancements in life quality through increased opportunities in mainstream education and employment, alongside improved economic resources, "For example, anti-discrimination legislation, removal of social and environmental barriers, accessible transport, more opportunities to participate in mainstream education and employment, and more economic resources all improve the quality of life of disabled people. As a result, people may have more social contacts, more opportunities, and more access to the mainstream world, all generating more inclusion" (181-182).

Chennat in *Disability, Inclusion, and Inclusive Education* underscores the positive impact of inclusive education on children with disabilities, emphasising the diverse educational settings tailored to individual needs. She says, "Inclusive education has its own significant positive impacts on the development of children with disabilities, and this is not contested. But when children with disability are accepted as a highly heterogeneous group, a continuum of educational settings has to be considered from where the best option of placement may be decided as per the needs of these children" (45). Understanding this continuum of educational options is crucial in promoting an environment that maximises the development of students with disabilities.

In evaluating educational approaches, special education emerges as a subject of scrutiny. Goodley's *Disability Studies: An Interdisciplinary Introduction* delves into the advantages and drawbacks of special education. Lipsky and Gartner's insights highlight its potential to cater to the unique needs of disabled children, but it also raises "concerns about the low academic attainment of students within this framework" (141). Moreover, Gerber's critique, as quoted by Goodley, questions the segregating nature and effectiveness of special

education, framing it as a potentially isolating system within the broader educational landscape (141).

The novels *From Anna* and *Listen for the Singing* by Jean Little effectively address prejudice, language discrimination, and socio-cultural changes. In the article "Creating Characters with Diversity in Mind," Beverley Brenna notes Little's writing style, stating that "Jean Little's work often focuses on a character finding strength from within, rather than a solution appearing from outside." Thus, Little portrays the experiences of individuals with disabilities in a realistic manner, showing how they overcome challenges through both internal and external support. Additionally, she provides insight into the experiences of individuals with disabilities as they adjust to new environments, learn new languages, and navigate socio-cultural changes.

The current chapter delves into the paramount importance of education, social integration, and interpersonal connections in the existence of individuals with disabilities. Emphasis is placed on the topics of education, a society that is inclusive in nature, the pursuit of acceptance in new environments, the surmounting of linguistic prejudice, and the breaking down of social barriers. These issues are thoroughly explored as they play a crucial role in the experiences of individuals with disabilities.

The chapter is a comprehensive examination of the works of Jean Little, specifically *From Anna* and *Listen for the Singing*, with a central emphasis on the previously enumerated subjects. The novels chronicle the life of Anna Solden, serving as a representation of the developmental stages, education, and maturation of an individual with a disability. Through Anna's journey, the novels shed light on sociocultural difficulties, the immigrant experience in Canada, the process of linguistic and cultural assimilation, the pursuit of social recognition, and the difficulties in leading a conventional life despite one's disability.

The chapter examines Anna's disability from the perspective of the social model. This model critiques barriers created by society and argues that by removing these barriers, individuals with disabilities can attain independence and equality. The social model highlights societal oppression and discrimination, rather than personal shortcomings. In Lennard J. Davis's *The Disability Studies Reader 5th ed.*, Oliver's thoughts on the social model are quoted as, "The social model demonstrates that the problems disabled individuals face are the result of social oppression and exclusion, not their individual deficits. This places the moral responsibility on society to remove the burdens imposed and enable disabled individuals to participate" (199). Despite this, Anna still faces several barriers in her life as an immigrant, a student with a disability, and as a member of society.

The life of Anna in these two novels is depicted vividly, with a key focus on her immigration, education, socialisation, inclusion, and human relationships. Marian Halcombe's "Review: *From Anna* and *Listen For the Singing* by Jean Little" published on *Shut Up, Heathcliff*, states that, "Jean Little masterfully captures both Anna's smaller-scale struggles and significant historical events." As such, this chapter delves into these concepts in depth, as issues facing individuals with disabilities occupy a significant portion of these narratives.

In the realm of immigration, children with disabilities encounter a significant hurdle that negatively impacts their emotional well-being and social integration. The challenge of adapting to a new place, language, and culture can prove arduous for these individuals. Within the novel *From Anna*, which takes place during the inter-war period, migration serves as the primary obstacle confronted by the protagonist, Anna Solden, and her family. The German family is forced to emigrate from their war-torn homeland to Canada due to the conflict's pressures. Anna's father determines to relocate his family to ensure their safety, yet the rest of the family remains apprehensive about leaving their country of origin for a foreign land. Despite the resistance, Anna's father recognises the potential advantages afforded by

Canada and opts to migrate nonetheless. Hugo O'Doherty's article, "Canada Reduces Barriers to Disabled Immigrants" published on *Moving2 Canada*, highlights the opportunities available to disabled immigrants in Canada, asserting that "These newcomers can contribute and are not a burden to Canada." However, the remainder of the Solden family remains resistant to the move.

Anna, the youngest of the five Solden siblings, grapples with physical awkwardness and discomfort. Additionally, reading poses a challenge for her as she struggles to differentiate between letters in the alphabet. As noted in the text, "When Anna began her struggle with the alphabet, many of the letters looked the same to her" (*FA* 14). Despite her mother's attempts to assist her, Anna experiences difficulty performing basic tasks such as catching a ball or skipping, often tripping and falling. Her parents remain unaware of her condition and struggles during their time in Germany.

According to the novel, early intervention is crucial for individuals with disabilities, as exemplified by Anna's situation. Anna is depicted as too young to fully comprehend her disability, and her parents are also depicted as being unaware of it. This lack of understanding presents significant challenges for both Anna and her family. The novel emphasises the importance of early intervention in supporting the development of individuals with disabilities, echoing the sentiments expressed in the *UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre* paper's "Promoting The Rights Of Children With Disabilities."

Anna's struggles both at home and in social settings are exacerbated by her unidentified disability. Unlike her peers, Anna is seen as an outsider, which is evident in her school experience where she is frequently scolded by her German teacher, Frau Schmidt, for her poor academic performance. As the novel depicts, Anna is often humiliated for her struggles, such as when Frau Schmidt snaps at her to focus on her studies rather than daydreaming, "Anna, you cannot afford to sit and dream. Frau Schmidt snapped. Not if you

want to finish the primer" (*FA* 17). Anna's disability remains unknown to her and her family, which compounds her difficulties both at home and in school. It is only when Anna migrates to Canada that her family learns about her visual impairment. The *UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre* paper, "Promoting The Rights Of Children With Disabilities," emphasises the importance of early intervention in the lives of children with disabilities:

Early identification and assessment, combined with appropriate interventions, that potential difficulties can be identified in time to limit the consequences of an impairment on a child's life and development and to maximize participation in all the activities usual for the child's age group. (22)

UNICEF recommends that families, particularly parents, can promote early identification by being prepared to monitor their child's development using simple tools and having a basic understanding of what developmental milestones a child should reach at different ages. This helps ensure that any delays or issues can be identified and addressed early on.

Anna's position as the youngest of five siblings often makes her feel overlooked, as illustrated in the novel, "Nobody was paying any attention to her except her father" (*FA* 11). In response, Anna's father, Ernst Solden, shows her special love and attention to make her feel valued. However, Anna's mother, Klara Solden, does not provide the same level of care and sometimes becomes angry when dealing with Anna. Anna is further frustrated by her mother's habit of calling her siblings "The Dearest Child" when they do something noteworthy, while she never earns the title despite her efforts, "Anna struggled on and got nowhere" (*FA* 25). Consequently, Anna feels isolated and different from her family and waits eagerly for her father's return to receive the love and warmth she craves.

Anna's sense of exclusion and inferiority within her family leads to loneliness and a strong reliance on her father for comfort and happiness. She expresses this sentiment when

she greets him warmly, saying, "they're busy fighting about what happened in school today, she explained. But I sat on the window sill and watched until I saw you coming" (FA 2). Due to her awkwardness and clumsiness, Anna becomes a target for teasing and mockery from her siblings, such as when Rudi calls her "crazy" (FA 11). These experiences make Anna hesitant to interact with her siblings and exacerbate her feelings of alienation and inferiority.

The researchers Nazilla Khanlou, et al., have published a research paper titled "Voices of Immigrant Mothers of Children with Disabilities: Availability and Use of Social Support" published on *Health York University*, which emphasises equal participation for individuals with disabilities. They highlight a quote from UNICEF's "The State of the World's Children 2013: Children with Disabilities," emphasising the right to equal participation in the lives of children with disabilities:

Children with disabilities should not be treated or regarded simply as the recipients of charity. They have the same rights as others- among these, the right to life and to the opportunities that flow from good health care, nutrition and education, the right to express their views and participate in making decisions, and the right to enjoy equal participation in making decisions, and the right to enjoy equal protection under the law. They belong at the centre of efforts to build inclusive and equitable societies- not only as beneficiaries, but as agents of change. (1)

The quote from Khanlou et al. highlights the importance of treating children with disabilities as equal individuals with the same rights as others. The authors stress that children with disabilities should not be seen simply as recipients of charity, but as individuals who have the right to life and access to healthcare, nutrition, education, and the ability to express their opinions and participate in decision-making. They also have the right to equal protection under the law. The authors emphasise that children with disabilities should be at

the center of efforts to build inclusive and equitable societies, not only as recipients of support, but as agents of change who can play an active role in shaping their own lives and communities. This perspective is important in promoting the dignity and agency of children with disabilities, and in working towards a more inclusive and equitable world for all.

Jean Little's depiction of the Solden family's internal struggles occurs within the context of the socio-political climate of World War II. Ernst Solden, Anna's father, is forced to make a sudden decision to migrate to Canada due to these circumstances. This unexpected move causes unrest within the family, as they were unprepared for such a drastic change. As one character in the novel observes, "No reasons given. He is going to try to get out of Germany" (*FA* 19).

The Solden family's immigration was not a voluntary decision, but rather an unexpected and urgent move prompted by the dangers of World War II. As Ernst Solden remarks, "The troubled times... he said. I think they are just beginning. We are seeing only a faint shadow of the darkness that threatens us" (*FA* 10). Despite this sense of impending danger, the family is filled with fear and unease about leaving their home in Germany.

Ernst Solden is cognizant of Anna's challenges and takes them into consideration when contemplating the decision to emigrate. He believes that it would be in their best interest, particularly Anna's, to move to a peaceful and stable country like Canada. In fact, he made a promise to Anna that she would grow up where her thoughts are free. As stated in the text, "I told her she would grow up where thoughts are free," he said (*FA* 20). The primary motivation behind the move is to provide better educational opportunities for the Solden children, especially Anna. Ernst Solden hopes that Canada will offer Anna more educational opportunities. Klara Solden, on the other hand, expresses concern about the unknown consequences of immigration and argues with her husband about it:

So we must all change our lives for your Anna! Why, she is the one of all the children who most needs to stay right here. She is only beginning to learn now.

Frau Schmidt says she is stubborn... but whatever is wrong, making her start all over again in a new place would be the worst thing in the world for her!

(FA 20)

This passage expresses Klara Solden's concerns about the impact of migration on Anna, who she believes is particularly vulnerable due to her needs and limitations. She believes that uprooting Anna and starting over in a new place would be the worst thing for her, as she is only just beginning to make progress and learn. Klara argues that everyone else should change their lives to accommodate Anna, rather than making her adapt to a new environment, which could set her back in her development. The mention of Frau Schmidt's opinion that Anna is stubborn further emphasises Klara's concerns about the challenges that Anna may face in a new setting.

Anna's uncle's lawyer informs the Solden family that the English language spoken in Canada is different from the German form of English. The family is concerned about the potential language barrier and discrimination they may face. However, they are determined to learn English and integrate into their new country. Ernst Solden provides guidance and support to the family in their efforts to learn the language. In order to comfort each other and prepare for their migration, they encourage one another and remind themselves that they have each other for support. As Anna's uncle's lawyer states, "Let's not be lonely. Why, we all have each other. We can make a fresh start together, we Soldens. We just need some courage" (FA 41). Therefore, the Solden family prepares for their migration both mentally and physically.

Little highlights the dual challenges of migration and language acquisition faced by the Solden family. The family's lack of fluency in English presents a significant obstacle, particularly for Anna who struggles to learn the English alphabet. In Canada, English is the predominant language, and the Soldens must learn it in order to integrate into their new society. Fortunately, Ernst Solden, a respected English teacher at a private school, is able to

assist his family in improving their language skills. With his guidance, the family embarks on a journey to master the English language as part of their adaptation to their new home:

With a little practice, Rudi and Gretchen did surprisingly well. But it wasn't all just due to their brilliance, as Rudi claimed. He had been learning English in school for four years now and Gretchen for three. The twins had only had one year of it and they made hundreds of mistakes. Mama and Anna were the only two who know nothing at all about it. (FA 23)

This passage describes the Solden family's ongoing struggle in learning English, the language used in their new home in Canada. Rudi and Gretchen, who have four and three years of English classes respectively, show great progress in the language with some practice. Despite Rudi's claims of brilliance, their success is also attributed to the time they spend studying the language. The twins, on the other hand, struggle with the language, making frequent mistakes despite only having one year of English classes. Mama and Anna, who have no prior knowledge of the language, face the greatest challenges in learning it.

The Solden family engages in English language practice prior to their departure from Germany and continues to do so after arriving in Canada. Ernst Solden emphasises the importance of speaking English, particularly during dinner, stating, "From now on, every night, we will speak nothing but English at our evening meal" (FA 21). While all the children, except Anna, have some English language education, Klara Solden and Anna struggle with the language. Anna's visual impairment makes learning the English alphabet particularly challenging. Nonetheless, the Solden family remains committed to learning English, while still maintaining their attachment to Germany and the German language. Once the family becomes proficient in English, they switch back to speaking German at home as a way of preserving their connection to their native language.

As Anna prepares for her family's migration, she faces personal struggles. Ernst Solden, her father who is an English teacher at a prestigious school, plays an important role in

their preparations. He tries his best to help Anna learn the English alphabet, but Anna's teacher in Germany, Frau Schmidt, mocks her for her difficulties and suggests, "I understand your father is an English master in one of the exclusive schools. Perhaps he can teach you something!" (FA 16). Despite their efforts, Anna struggles to learn due to her unknown low vision, leading her family to view her as slow-learning and clumsy. Ernst Solden expresses his concern, stating, "He could not figure out what was wrong between Anna and the alphabet" (FA 16). This experience causes Anna to develop a hatred towards reading and her teacher, Frau Schmidt.

Anna's family's lack of awareness and societal expectations regarding her disability contribute to her continued disability. She becomes withdrawn and avoids people and situations out of fear of negative reactions. Anna has no interest in learning the alphabet and only wants her father's constant love and attention. Her difficulties with learning and making friends are a result of her unknown disability, leading her to believe that "she would never read and she would never be friends with the children who laughed at her" (FA 16). Although her family wrongly blames Anna for her awkwardness and poor learning skills, it is society and her family's lack of understanding about her visual impairment that is the root cause. Mohsen A.F. El-Hazmi's article "Early Recognition and Intervention for Prevention of Disability and its Complications" emphasises the significance of early detection and intervention for parents of children with disabilities on the *WHO EMRO* website:

The family in general and the mother in particular play a significant role in the early detection of disability. Abnormalities in development, both physical and others, and in learning ability may become obvious to the diligent eyes of the mother much earlier than a clinical diagnosis can be made. Early detection and early intervention can avoid the precipitation of several of the disabilities and can reduce the impact the disability may have on the family.

Early intervention is crucial in reducing the impact of a disability on an individual's life. The quicker the disability is detected and addressed, the better chances the individual has for development. In Anna's case, her disability goes unnoticed and she experiences the consequences. Her parents fail to recognise her disability and in turn, their responsibilities as caregivers. However, Anna's parents are unaware of her disability and instead believe that she is simply slow and a poor learner, making her situation even worse.

Anna, like others, feels apprehensive about what lies ahead. However, she remains hopeful that her new life in Canada will be different from her past experiences. Anna expresses her anxiety about starting a new life, frequently asking "When will we get to Canada?" (FA 44). She is nervous about her new school, the language, and unfamiliar surroundings. Nevertheless, her father tries to boost her confidence and convince her that life will be better in Canada because of its exceptional support system for people with disabilities. This sentiment is echoed in Mary Ann McColl's article "Should I Say 'disabled person' or 'person with a disability'" published on *The Conversation*, which asserts that "Disability is a reality for nearly one-quarter of Canadians." Despite feeling scared and uncertain about this new beginning, Anna is willing to embark on this journey with her father's encouragement.

Upon the Solden family's arrival in Toronto, all of the children are obliged to undergo medical assessments as part of their preparation for school. Dr. Franz Schumacher, a medical examiner, performs the examinations. During Anna's assessment, Dr. Schumacher observes that she has poor eyesight and informs the family of his findings, stating "She sees very poorly, very poorly indeed. She should be wearing glasses. She probably should have had them two or three years ago" (FA 78). Anna is fitted with glasses, but Dr. Schumacher clarifies that even with them, she will not have normal vision and will need to attend a specialised sight-saving class. He further explains that "Lessons are made easier there for children with poor eyesight" (FA 80).

After a significant change, Anna's life takes a new turn when her doctor, Dr. Schumacher, identifies her visual impairment. Dr. Schumacher helps Anna's family comprehend her difficulties in seeing and completing tasks, and persuades them to enrol her in a school that caters to her special needs. Subsequently, Anna starts to acknowledge and embrace her identity. Upon realising her disability, "This time the smile was fine, but you could still see where she had made the mistake" (FA 94). Anna's move to Canada proves to be advantageous as it presents her with fresh opportunities and solutions for her challenges. Her life transitions from being isolated to receiving appropriate support.

Anna's enrolment in a sight-saving school offers her a new and unique educational experience. Equipped with specialised tools such as large pencils, desks that lift upwards, and green chalkboards, the classroom is tailored to meet Anna's needs. Coming from a regular school, everything in the new environment is new and strange to her. Anna notices that "Even the children were different. Most of them were older than Anna" (FA 89). This exciting and unsettling new environment triggers conflicting emotions in Anna, making her feel both calm and unhappy. As her family remains unaware of what is happening to her at school, "The first week was over. Then the next. Still Anna's family had no idea what was happening to her at school. They were not surprised. They were used to Anna and her moods, Anna and her silences. They hoped for the best" (FA 114). Nevertheless, Anna's parents hold onto the hope that this new school will provide their daughter with better opportunities.

The teacher, Miss Williams, exemplifies a compassionate educator who possesses an intimate understanding of her students. She demonstrates unwavering support and patience towards all of the children in her class. Upon Anna's arrival at school, Miss Williams warmly welcomes her, embodying the sentiment that "Miss Williams who sought and began to find a new Anna" (FA 114). Anna's spirits are lifted by this display of kindness, and she is further encouraged when the teacher exclaims, "That's perfect, Anna ... Perfect!" (FA 158).

Miss Williams gives Anna extra attention due to her heightened sense of awkwardness in comparison to the other students. One day, when Anna becomes lost trying to locate her classroom due to her low vision, Miss Williams insists that Isobel, one of her classmates, accompany her to the classroom. Ranjitha Dawn in her book, *The Social Model of Disability in India: Politics of Identity and Power*, expresses Mike Oliver's viewpoint on a person's physical and institutional challenges. The first is an impairment that can be controlled, whereas the second is a true disability that prevents access or survival. Dawn condensed Oliver's statement as "According to him lack of mobility is impairment, but lack of access to essential facilities was a disability" (13). In this book, Anna struggles to locate her classroom. From that point on, Isobel becomes a close friend of Anna's. These actions taken by Miss Williams greatly contribute to Anna's consistent attendance at school.

Miss Williams embodies the ideal teacher that children with disabilities hope to encounter. She demonstrates exceptional care towards Anna, who faces two distinct challenges - language and disability. Prajakta Sakpal, in the article "The Role of a Teacher in Inclusive Education" published in *Lead School*, advocates for teachers to prioritise and support children with disabilities to achieve academic success, emphasising that "The teachers identify their special students' social, emotional, behavioural, physical, and academic strengths." Miss Williams exemplifies this approach by lovingly caring for Anna, ensuring that she always wears a smile on her face, as described in the following passage, "Anna practiced smiling after that. To start with, she did it shyly and seldom. Yet Miss Williams always smiled back" (115).

The comparison between Anna's previous school and her current one provides valuable insight into the type of instructional support required by students with disabilities in their early years. At her former school in Germany, Anna struggled with learning due to her disability going unnoticed by the Solden family, resulting in a lack of necessary care for her

needs. The school community perceived Anna as a poor learner, and her teacher, Frau Schmidt, exacerbated this issue by belittling and scolding her in front of the class. This treatment had a significantly negative impact on Anna's mental health, leading to her dislike of attending school and a hatred towards learning.

Upon arriving in Canada, Anna enrolled in a sight-saving school that provided a welcoming and supportive environment, as well as a kind-hearted teacher named Miss Williams. This experience fostered Anna's love for learning and made her eager to attend school every day, enabling her to reach her full potential. In contrast to her past experiences, Miss Williams encouraged and helped Anna to read aloud, an opportunity she had never been offered before. As stated in the text, "Anna had never been invited to read aloud before. Frau Schmidt had given orders, not invitations. 'I'll help if you get stuck,' Miss Williams assured her" (FA 119). This instance exemplifies the vital role that teachers play in the lives of all students, especially those with disabilities, in supporting them to learn and excel. On the website, *Teacher Vision*, the article, titled, "Teaching Students with Special Needs" provides information on the needs of special educators, their challenges, and the sacrifices to play this role:

The task of teaching learning disabled children presents unique challenges to educators. These students may need more time and patience and specialized instructional strategies in a structured environment that supports and enhances their learning potential. It is important to note that learning disabled students are not incapable of learning, but rather, they require different types of instruction that are tailored to their specific learning abilities. The teacher must take into account their needs and find ways to support them in the best way possible to help them reach their full potential.

Additionally, Anna develops meaningful friendships during her time at the sight-saving school. One of her closest companions is Isobel, who has limited vision in one eye. As the text notes, "Isobel's eyes did cross sometimes but they were nice eyes, brown and kind" (FA 109). Unfortunately, Isobel is subjected to ridicule and bullying from her peers due to her eye condition, with taunts such as "Cross-eyed... Cross-eyed!" and "Four-eyes... four-eyes!" (FA 108). Despite this, Anna and Isobel form a close bond, with their friendship known to everyone at the school as "Isobel, who still kept Anna under her wing" (FA 114). They rely on each other for companionship and support. The Soldens are pleasantly surprised when Anna brings Isobel to their store, as they had never met any of Anna's friends before. As the text states, "She had never brought a friend to meet them before. She had not had anyone to bring" (FA 128). This highlights the significance of Isobel to Anna, who had not previously had any close friendships.

Isobel assists Anna in locating her classroom and provides her with guidance as she navigates the school. She informs the teacher that Anna has encountered difficulty finding her way around the large and unfamiliar school, having become lost approximately six times. As Anna notes, "This school is so big and all the halls look the same" (FA 106), she endeavours to find her classroom without seeking aid from her mother or classmates. This is facilitated by Miss Williams' commitment to promoting equality and treating all students equally.

Isobel forms a friendship with Anna and offers her unwavering support and companionship in the classroom. Anna is greatly moved by the kindness and consideration shown by Isobel and feels as if she experiences her father's love through her actions. Isobel's presence in Anna's life is described as "Angel Footsteps!" (FA 106) and plays a critical role in helping Anna acclimate to her new surroundings.

The students in the classroom exhibit a high level of engagement and demonstrate a keen interest in their studies. However, Anna's participation is noted to be less consistent by

Miss Williams. To mitigate this, Miss Williams creates a welcoming and inclusive environment for Anna, which enhances her happiness and self-confidence. Initially, Anna experiences difficulty understanding English, describing it as gibberish, “The English words sounded like gibberish” (FA 22).

Anna's parents are characterised by their kindness and empathy. Initially, Klara Solden, Anna's mother, demonstrates impatience and harshness towards Anna. Anna's siblings, particularly her eldest brother Rudi, exhibit behaviour bordering on cruelty, with Rudi referring to Anna as Awkward Anna, “Rudi still called her Awkward Anna when he thought about it” (FA 162).

Accordingly, family plays a key role in the lives of children with disabilities. The basic understanding and inclusive atmosphere begin with the family, and then extends to society. The article titled "Role of Parents in Care of Hearing Impaired" from the website *Vikaspedia* stresses that it is the responsibility of parents and families to provide a stress-free and valuable life for children with disabilities, just like others:

Parents and family need to fulfill certain responsibilities in order to function. ... When a child is handicapped, these responsibilities become more crucial. There is the expense, the time, the energy needed to care for the disabled member and his/her safety. Besides this there is the difficulty of helping the disabled member develop a good self-image and social skills, and the problems of seeing to it that the disabled member receives an appropriate education.

The new challenges in Canada make the Solden family realise and understand more about Anna's disability. Prior to their migration, the Solden's were unaware of her disability. This is exemplified in Sailaja Chennat's *Disability, Inclusion and Inclusive Education* where

she states that society plays a major role in influencing the parents of children with disabilities:

Society's perceptions shape parents' initial reaction towards their child with autism, or any disability. It often takes years for parents to themselves accept their child with disability in a positive light and without judgements. All efforts are directed towards 'normalization' and making the child fit into society's judgmental norms. (90)

In due course, Anna develops her language skills with conscious effort, thereby strengthening her bond with her classmates. Her teacher, Miss Williams, is impressed by Anna's enthusiasm, eagerness, and self-assurance towards learning English. "Miss Williams expresses her delight, saying 'It's delightful to have you among us, Anna,'" (FA 88). Nevertheless, the task of acquiring a new language is challenging for immigrants, as illustrated by Anna and her family. Nevertheless, Anna thrives under the tutelage of her special education teacher, Miss Williams, who imparts knowledge with patience and compassion. According to an article titled "What Does a Special Education Teacher Do?" on the *Career Explorer* website by Sokanu, the primary role of special education teachers is to provide personalised support to students:

Special education teachers work with students with severe cognitive, emotional, or physical disabilities. Their job is primarily teaching them life skills and basic literacy. However, the majority of special education teachers work with children with mild to moderate disabilities, modifying the general education curriculum to meet the child's individual needs and providing required instruction. Most special education teachers instruct students at the preschool, elementary, middle, and secondary school level, although some work with infants and toddlers.

Anna experiences a sense of contentment regarding her migration to Canada. She had previously felt wretched and like an outcast in Germany, her own country, "That was something she understood. That was Awkward Anna's land where she didn't know what to do. If only there was a comforting hand to hold! She knew exactly what that would feel like" (FA 151). However, in her new country, Anna feels a sense of belonging and comfort. She is able to interact with others in a way that makes her feel understood and at ease. In Canada, the Solden family is accepting of Anna's disability, and the community as a whole is mindful of her needs. As a result, Anna's exclusion ends in her host country. A significant factor contributing to this newfound sense of belonging is the education she receives in Canada.

Anna's sense of alienation is relieved as she is provided with equitable opportunities and accommodations. Education plays a crucial role in transforming her life, enabling her to attend school, form friendships, and acquire fluency in English. Although acquiring a new language can be arduous for all newcomers, Anna confronts extra obstacles stemming from her struggles with reading. Upon her arrival in Canada, she initially harbours apprehensions about learning English.

Anna is initially mocked and laughed at by her siblings. However, after attending school and making friends, she learns English exceptionally well, impressing her teacher Miss Williams. "And your English! I can hardly believe you've been in Canada such a short time. You are amazing, Anna" (FA 98). This praise from her teacher earns Anna recognition and makes the Solden family proud and happy for her.

When Anna is excluded by her siblings, she refuses to accept it. She refuses to be excluded from her sibling group. Sailaja Chennat, in her book *Disability, Inclusion and Inclusive Education*, highlights the negative consequences of exclusion for individuals with disabilities. "In fact, without feeling included, people are more likely to experience poor mental and physical health, loneliness, isolation and poor self-esteem" (40).

Anna's acquisition of language is not the only noteworthy development in her transition to life in Canada. Like her older siblings, she quickly adapts to Canadian culture, learning about activities such as skating and saving up for her own pair of skates. In addition to mastering English, Anna also becomes more engaged with her family and the wider social environment. The welcoming and supportive attitude of Canadians plays a key role in facilitating Anna's assimilation, despite the challenges posed by her disability. With the help of her doctor, teacher, and other individuals, Anna feels at ease and is able to thrive in her new home.

Catherine Carstairs and Sydney Kruth's article, "Disability and Citizenship in the Life and Fiction of Jean Little" in *Social History*, discusses Anna's efforts to integrate into her new home and become an equal part of the country. They write, "Anna too must learn to integrate. Like her siblings, she must learn to speak English, but she also needs to come out of her shell and become a fully participating member of her family" (356). Education plays a crucial role in helping Anna adapt to her host country, make friends, and have equal access to society.

Ernst Solden underscores the importance of the decision to migrate to Canada, which entails overcoming various challenges related to language, culture, and daily life. However, he notes that those who make this journey are not alone in their efforts to build a new life for themselves and their families. Canada is a country that is deeply committed to caring for its citizens, ensuring that they receive the necessary support when facing difficulties. According to Ernst Solden, this support manifests in various forms, including protection, employment, food, education, and solutions for individuals with disabilities like Anna.

Anna's experience in Canada is marked by a profound sense of safety and contentment. Despite acknowledging her limitations and challenges, she finds solace in the fact that her family members are understanding and supportive of her situation. This stands in stark contrast to her experiences in Germany, where her mistakes were frequently scrutinised

and criticised by her teacher, Frau Schmidt, who was often harsh and impatient with Anna. As evidenced by the following quote, "The teacher clicked her tongue against her teeth impatiently" (FA 15), Anna's struggles in Germany were met with a lack of compassion and empathy. By contrast, in Canada, Anna is embraced for who she is and her mistakes are viewed as opportunities for growth and learning. Reflecting on her experiences, Anna observes, "Maybe it's okay to make mistakes" (FA 107), highlighting the more nurturing and supportive environment that she encounters in Canada. As a result, Miss William is able to help Anna better understand and learn from her mistakes, without magnifying or harshly critiquing them.

Anna's experience in her new Canadian classroom is characterised by feelings of love and protection. She takes pride in her ability to speak English and notes that she can even think in English now. As she tells her mother, "I can speak English, Mama. Not just a little bit. Really. I do it all the time at school. I even think in English now mostly. I do it... almost as well as you do" (FA 199). This newfound confidence is a stark contrast to her time in Germany and ignites hope within Anna. Through her education, she gains the skills and confidence to feel included and valued by her siblings. Rather than being excluded from their playtime, they now teach her games such as "Snakes and Ladders". As she opens the game, Anna reflects on the progress she has made, "With her glasses, it was easy to see. It wouldn't be like the old days when nobody wanted her to play. She would show them what she could do with these games of her own" (FA 179). This sense of inclusion and newfound confidence highlights the transformative power of education for individuals with disabilities.

According to this novel, Anna's education plays a crucial role in helping her properly learn the English language. Although everyone in the Solden family is unfamiliar with the language, Anna struggles more than the others. An article titled "6 Ways Educators Can Overcome Language Barriers with Parents" from the website *Baylor University*, Online

Graduate Programs explains the importance of learning the language in the host country.

Migrated students with disabilities can benefit from the support of special education teachers:

For any educator, being mindful of students' cultural differences, including languages spoken with their families, is an essential part of creating a welcoming space that is optimal for learning. And part of being a mindful educator is figuring out how best to facilitate parental involvement in education when English is not a parent's first language while also respecting the cultures of the students and their families.

Anna and her siblings purposefully learn the language of their new country with the help of their father. Learning the language is undoubtedly the most significant challenge when it comes to migration. It is vital to learn the language and adopt the culture of the migrated country. Anna's siblings seem to learn the language effortlessly and quickly compared to Anna, but her parents appreciate her interest and talent in learning the language vividly. With the help of her parents and teacher, Anna efficiently learns the language despite being an immigrant with a disability. Her parents' express happiness and pride in her, saying, "She is Special, my Anna" (*FA* 201). They are pleasantly surprised to see Anna being so active and intelligent, even if a book is difficult to read. Anna does not skip reading a challenging book; instead, she gives it a try:

It seemed important, though, to read it now, hard or not. The title was a long name which Anna could not pronounce. She did not bother trying. Only half taking in what she read, she started at the top of the first verse. He was writing it to someone who had lain awake, watching over him. She reached the third line. (*FA* 151)

Anna is happy at her new school in Canada. She finds that everyone likes her and feels comfortable there. According to an article titled "Studying Canada As a Student with

Disabilities" on the *Study in Canada* website, there are many services, grants, and equipment available to help children with disabilities learn and integrate. The article states that "With the right high-quality student services and investments in the field of education, studying in Canada as a student with disabilities has become easier than ever." Anna does not feel excluded in Canada. "Anna felt something happening deep inside herself, something warm and alive. She was happy" (FA 98). This realisation helps Anna see the differences between her new school in Canada and her old school in Germany.

Anna's siblings distance themselves from her because of her clumsiness and irregularity, and they exclude her from their Christmas plans. Anna feels angry and heartbroken upon learning this, as stated by the quote "Anna's unhappiness returned with her" (FA 150). Despite this setback, Anna remains resilient and continues her learning journey. She experiences a deep sense of happiness and fulfillment, as described in the quote "Anna felt something happening deep inside herself, something warm and alive. She was happy" (FA 98). Therefore, it can be concluded that Anna's transformation was made possible through the influence of education and the welcoming and inclusive environment of her host country.

In the host country, the Solden family faces financial challenges that make it difficult for them to have the kind of Christmas celebrations they were accustomed to in Germany. As stated in the quote, "The children tried to pretend it did not exist. After all, Mama and Papa did talk of Christmas- but not in the old way" (FA 138), Anna and her siblings become aware of the situation. Rather than asking their parents for money to buy presents as they had done in the past, the children decide to either make their parents presents or earn the money themselves, "This year, we'll make our presents for them and save them the Christmas money Papa always hand out. When they go to give it to you. We have decided to make our own arrangements. I'm pretty sure, the more I think about it, that they're worrying about money for Christmas as much as anything" (FA 140-141).

It is a common occurrence for children with disabilities to face exclusion from various activities and events due to the perception that they are unable to participate in such activities. This novel portrays a similar instance where Anna due to her disability, is deprived of the opportunity to prepare Christmas gifts for her parents on Christmas Eve.

During the Christmas season, Anna's siblings collaborate to organise their gifts for their parents. They agree to either create or procure presents through their own efforts. Regrettably, they choose not to include Anna in this secret project, asserting that she is incapable of contributing. Nevertheless, Rudi urges his siblings to exclude Anna from the Christmas gift planning and preparation. He claims that his parents will not accept anything from Anna, stating, "They won't anticipate any gifts from her once they learn that we're making the presents ourselves." (*FA* 142). Consequently, Rudi's words inflict emotional distress upon Anna.

Anna is angry and heartbroken. At school, her fellow classmates and Miss Williams pick up on her despair. When she finally confesses her trouble, they all sympathise with her. Miss William helps Anna with a plan. Anna is suggested to do a basket-weaving. It is an activity for people who are visually impaired. Hence, Anna accepts to do basket weaving with the support and guidance of Miss William. Anna sings with the excitement of giving a present to her parents which is done by herself, "A Christmas present, I am making my Christmas present. ... And Papa will see" (*FA* 162).

Anna is unable to afford gifts for her parents, but she is determined to keep her present plans a secret. She refrains from dropping any hints and ensures that no one suspects her involvement in the Christmas gift-giving, "Anna did not hint. Nobody knew, nobody for one second suspected that she too was working on a Christmas gift" (*FA* 166). Despite her siblings' frequent discouragement, Anna yearns to surprise her parents with a heartfelt present.

Anna is ready and motivated to do a basket, which is going to be a Christmas present to her parents. When the materials arrive, Anna takes great pains to make her basket as perfect as possible. When completed, it is sent to the school for the blind, where it is painted green with small gold stripes. Anna is thrilled about doing such a beautiful gift and stores it at school, safely away from the prying eyes of her siblings. Miss Williams explains the procedure of doing the basket, hence Anna feels it is complicated for her to do. The procedure of making wastepaper baskets as little describes:

There were circles and ovals of wood with holes drilled in a neatly spaced row around each edge. There were bundles of straight sticks, cream-colored and clean. There were lengths of reed, rolled up and tied in bunches so they would not spring free and trail all over the room. Some of the reeds were flat and as wide as her finger. Some were round and thin like brittle brown twine. (*FA* 155)

Anna initially thought that making a large basket was an insurmountable task, but she ultimately succeeded, demonstrating her determination, diligence, and affection for her parents. Despite feeling uncertain about the process, she mustered the courage to begin weaving after taking a deep breath, “She took a deep breath, gathered her courage, and started to weave” (*FA* 159). Although initially anxious, Anna gained confidence after observing and listening carefully to the instructions, “Anna was still worried but she watched carefully and listened hard. It did not sound impossible” (*FA* 157). Her siblings did not offer much assistance, but her classmates and Miss Williams provided her with the necessary support to create the impressive basket, “Anna picked an oval base. It looked good and big-she did not want to make a small present. She had just learned how to use a ruler. She took hers out of her desk and measured the piece of wood. It was six inches wide at the center and ten inches long” (*FA* 158).

As a result, Miss Williams takes it upon herself to provide guidance and assistance to Anna in the classroom setting. Anna invests considerable effort and time in crafting a basket, and ultimately achieves success, with the end result being described as "not messy" and completed with ease (*FA* 163). Consequently, Anna experiences a strong sense of happiness, fulfilment, and pride in herself. In comparison to her peers, who struggle to create their baskets with precision, Anna manages to produce a superior product, "(Several of the others had not able to manage this. Theirs went straight up like stovepipes.) All the ends were tucked in out of sight. There were no gaps. Anna turned it around slowly, gloating over it" (*FA* 163-64).

Dr. Schumacher goes beyond the traditional role of a physician, not only diagnosing Anna but also assisting her in improving her life. He demonstrates his care for Anna by providing financial support for the materials needed to create baskets, and he regards her as a special friend. Miss William informs Anna about Dr. Schumacher's assistance, which elicits excitement and surprise from Anna. With the help of Dr. Schumacher and Miss William, Anna successfully completes her basket, which boosts her confidence and determination to pursue her aspirations despite her disability.

Subsequently, on Christmas Eve, Anna presents her completed basket to her parents. Upon receiving the gift, her mother becomes emotional and admits, "I was the one who was blind all along. Dr. Schumacher should have prescribed me glasses" (*FA* 188). Anna's father also becomes emotional and acknowledges, "It is not just you, Klara. All of us have failed to see" (*FA* 188). Consequently, Anna experiences a sense of equal participation in preparing gifts for her parents, just like her siblings. As a result, Anna experiences feelings of happiness and gratitude towards Miss Williams for her assistance in creating the Christmas present.

Anna's brothers and sisters argue that Anna was incapable of creating the basket on her own. Gretchen undermines Anna's skill, claiming that others only compliment her to

boost her confidence, and that the basket is riddled with errors, “People only sat they like it to make you feel good. Everyone knows it’s full of mistakes” (FA 143). To bolster Anna's self-esteem, the Solden parents become angry and rebuke their other children. They contend that just like Anna, their siblings also required assistance in crafting or obtaining their own gifts.

Anna's dedication to independently crafting gifts and rapidly improving her English language skills is a testament to her scholarly achievements since arriving in Canada. As her mother's emotional reaction reveals, Anna's progress has had a profound impact on her family, "She was near tears again but only for a moment" (FA 200). Through her hard work, Anna is now able to express herself sincerely and bring her parents a sense of pride and happiness.

Anna composes a poem for her classmate Ben, despite lacking formal training in poetry, and puts forth a concerted effort to create a meaningful work. This poem serves as her Christmas present to Ben. Although Anna struggled to learn the English alphabet due to her disability while in Germany, after receiving specialised education in Canada, she is able to compose a poem unaided, “Benjamin Nathaniel... Is as brave as Daniel... When snowballs fly... Is braver than Daniel... We stand by his Side With pride” (FA 170).

Anna's tenacity and aptitude for learning garner admiration from both her parents and educators. Ultimately, Anna receives the affectionate title she had longed for from her mother, who "did not even hug to her heart that moment when, finally, she had become Mama's dearest, dearest child" (FA 201). This newfound recognition empowers Anna to embrace her independence and forge a robust sense of self. In a display of her newfound confidence, Anna sings, “And if tyrants take me ... ‘Die Gedanken Sind Frei!’” (FA 136).

Jean Little's novel *Listen for the Singing* is a sequel to *From Anna* that delves into a variety of themes, such as disability, inclusive education, family support, and the emotional impact of World War II on the characters. The story also introduces a new disability within

the family when Anna's brother Rudi becomes visually impaired due to the war. Throughout the novel, Anna's ongoing struggles with learning due to her visual impairment and her unwavering support for her brother are emphasised. However, the book also highlights a supportive environment where Anna's challenges are recognised and addressed through the provision of appropriate assistive devices to facilitate her learning.

Following Anna's acquisition of specialised skills and methods at a school designed for individuals with disabilities, Anna is required to make the transition to a mainstream educational setting. The novel chronicles Anna's journey from a specialised institution to a more inclusive one. Mrs. Schumacher, a teacher at Anna's Sight-Saving school, displays a profound affection and concern for Anna, as evidenced by her assertion that Anna is a delight to teach. Despite this admiration and Mrs. Schumacher's teaching role, she encourages Anna to pursue an education at a more inclusive school to ensure equal opportunities for academic and personal development. Mrs. Schumacher's endorsement is expressed as follows:

you're ready to leave the nest. Right now, hundreds of students your age are facing the uncertainty of beginning high school tomorrow. If you go now, you'll be one of them and you'll learn to fit in along with everyone else. If you wait, the way Isobel did, till you've finished grade ten in a special class, the others will have already made their adjustment and their friendship too. (*LFTS* 29)

Mrs. Schumacher advocates for Anna to attend an inclusive school, emphasising that Anna has much to learn about herself and that protection from the outside world will hinder this process, "You have so much to learn about yourself, and you won't find it out while we keep you protected" (*LFTS* 30). Encouraged by Mrs. Schumacher's words, Anna takes the entrance exam to join an inclusive school and enhance her learning experience with full participation in the educational realm. Despite her visual impairment, Anna competes with

students without disabilities and successfully passes the exam. Mrs. Schumacher praises Anna for her achievement, noting that "You've done nearly eight years' work in five! When you tried your entrance exams, you did exceptionally well and you were competing with pupils with normal sight" (*LFTS* 30).

Shortly after, Anna is left feeling disappointed and hurt by the news of Isobel's transfer to a different school, plunging her back into a state of solitude. Anna has grown accustomed to relying on Isobel for companionship and struggles to come to terms with the idea of attending school without her. Mrs. Schumacher, Anna's teacher, attempts to console her and relays a message from Isobel, "Isobel told me to remind you that she isn't your only friend," (*LFTS* 30). Mrs. Schumacher sympathises with both Anna and Isobel, recognising the difficulty of their situation. Anna, however, struggles to reconcile herself with the reality of Isobel's departure, "She willed herself not to cry. They said nothing, letting her take her time, seeing that she wanted to speak. Finally, she managed to say, in a small pinched voice, 'Can't I just stay on in the senior sight-saving class with you? Please! I know you don't want me to but... but...'" (*LFTS* 29).

Nevertheless, Anna confronts this situation and comes to terms with the need to move forward. For individuals with disabilities, finding a genuine and supportive friend can be a challenging and rare experience. In this novel, Anna is fortunate to have Isobel, who serves as a source of unwavering strength and support. Anna finds happiness and meaning in attending school alongside her dear friend, and as a result, she cherishes the memories they create together.

The novel sheds light on the crucial role of assistive devices and technology in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Despite her low vision, Anna encounters difficulty in learning but makes use of assistive devices that prove helpful to her. When Rudi inquires how Anna is reading, she responds, "In Braille" (*LFTS* 245). Braille is a tactile system that

individuals with visual impairments utilise for reading and writing. As a result, persons with disabilities can gain access to education with the aid of assistive technology. Anna employs Braille and a talking book machine to enhance her learning in the classroom, allowing her to learn without the need for human assistance. As the article "Amazing Benefits of Assistive Technology for Visually Impaired" on the *Braille Institute* website notes, "Achieving greater independence is another benefit of assistive technology for visually impaired."

Assistive devices represent valuable tools for individuals with disabilities, as they can significantly enhance their capacity to learn and participate in educational settings. Gustav Jarl et.al scholars quote WHO's definition of assistive technology, "AT is defined as 'any product, instrument, equipment or technology adapted or specially designed for improving the functioning of a disabled person'" In Anna's case, her admission to a sight-saving school enabled her to access a range of assistive devices that have proven essential for her learning.

As UNICEF's discussion paper entitled "Assistive Technology for Children with Disabilities: Creating Opportunities for Education, Inclusion and Participation" highlights, assistive technology can play a pivotal role in increasing access to education and improving academic outcomes for children with disabilities, ultimately contributing to positive socioeconomic impacts in their lives (14). Through the guidance of Mrs. Schumacher, Anna gradually learned how to utilise the available assistive devices, enabling her to become more self-reliant and effective in her academic pursuits.

Anna's classroom serves as a crucially inclusive space in her life, where both her teachers and classmates actively strive to understand her unique challenges and support her in her academic pursuits. As noted by Anita Julka and her co-authors in their book, *Including Children with Special Needs: Primary Stage*, creating an inclusive atmosphere and effective classroom environment is of utmost importance for ensuring the success of children with disabilities:

The classroom offers a dynamic, productive space where ideas, values, information, knowledge are shared and conveyed. Organization of the class and interactions amongst its fundamental components i.e., the students, teacher and curriculum-transactions, create potential for the group to move from a state of not knowing to one of knowing. (1)

In order to promote inclusion, education for individuals with disabilities is crucial. The article "Factors Influencing the Accessibility of Education for Children with Disabilities in India" in the journal *Global Education Review*, written by Sandhya Limaye, emphasises the importance of education as a powerful tool for promoting social change for individuals with disabilities:

Education is a right of every child whether she/he is disabled or non-disabled as education equips children to meet the challenges of the life. Education involves growing up knowing the environment in which we live in. It is a human right with immense power to transform the environment in which we live, as it is a powerful instrument of social change and often initiates upward movement in the social structure. In order to make education for all a reality, every child must have access to quality education. (43-44)

Anna's education and integration in her new school is supported by a team of teachers, including Miss Sutcliff, Mr. McNair, and Mr. Lloyd. Despite struggling with learning, Anna is encouraged by Mr. McNair to read in front of the class. Anna's determined efforts to read aloud, holding the book close to her face and persevering despite the difficulties she faces.

Anna benefits from the support of two classmates, Paula and Maggie, in the inclusive classroom. Their assistance throughout the school day makes a significant difference for Anna, who is perceived by Maggie as appearing just like any other student. However, Maggie also recognises that Anna faces challenges, such as difficulty seeing the board even when she

is at the front of the classroom, while Maggie can easily view it from the “back of the room” (*LFTS* 126). Therefore, friends of Anna support her during her challenging moments and are aware of her condition. The article titled “The Effectiveness of Peer Support to Increase Positive Social Interaction for Students with Special Needs” by Candace Pickens-Cantrell published on *Governors State University* illustrates the importance of peers in the inclusive classroom for improved learning and better mobility. He claims, “Peer support may have a tremendous effect on a child’s ability to function in the classroom. Creating a positive peer relationship between a general education and special education student may lead to growth in both students” (6). As a result, peers who understand disability make a better company.

Anna receives assistance from Maggie in reading texts for her studies. Despite this, Anna feels thankful for having large print books, as evidenced by the quote, "Anna knew right then that while it might be simpler to be blind, even the poorest vision was a gift to be treasured" (*LFTS* 170). Anna recognises the value of what she has and feels gratitude for it. Moreover, Anna becomes increasingly accustomed to her limited vision, as stated in the quote, "Anna had taken her limited vision for granted for so long now that their bewilderment caught her off guard" (*LFTS* 126).

Anna exhibits scholarly communication about her disability, as she is able to engage in healthy conversations with her peers who show interest in understanding her condition. As she states, "mostly, I just feel ordinary. Until I need help" (*LFTS* 127), her peers ask her about her feelings and Anna explains what she has learned from Dr. Schumacher regarding her vision, indicating her willingness to educate and inform others about her disability:

He said that I can see at twenty feet what you see at about one hundred. If we are both standing looking at a door, for instance, I see the door and you see the door-but you also maybe see the doorknob and the keyhole and the grain of the wood. I just know there’s a door there. I see as far as you do, more or less,

because we can both see to the horizon, but everything's dimmer and less distinct for me. (*LFTS* 128)

Although Anna's inclusion in mainstream school promotes her social integration, she faces numerous obstacles to overcome. One such challenge is her difficulty in learning math without any assistance, even from her father, who she knows is not proficient in the subject. As stated by Little, "Algebra, Anna said, looking away. She wished she could ask for aid, but he had often admitted he was no mathematician" (*LFTS* 147). Despite Rudi's proficiency in math, Anna is hesitant to approach him for help, fearing that he may ridicule her. Little notes, "He seemed kinder now but preoccupied. And what if he laughed at her!" (*LFTS* 147). Consequently, Anna struggles with math and lacks support from anyone, including Rudi, whom she is hesitant to ask.

Anna utilises large print books for easier reading, but struggles with smaller print during tests, as evidenced when she asks Mr. Lloyd if she can use a larger map and black ink to complete an assignment, "May I use this bigger map, sir please I can't see to put the places in on a smaller one. And I need it drawn in black ink" (*LFTS* 131). In response, Mr. Lloyd provides Anna with large print books for the test. Despite this accommodation, Anna still experiences anxiety when it comes to writing:

He returned to the front of the room and stood glaring out over the now-busy class. Anna's hands shook as she filled her fountain pen from her ink bottle. She got out her blotter. She knew the work well enough that she didn't have to use a pencil so she could erase. Then as her hand and her heartbeat steadied, she looked up at the teacher. (*LFTS* 131)

Another obstacle comes in the form of exam for Anna. Anna writes her exam with the typewriter in her old school. Where Isobel and Mrs. Schumacher assist her. However, in the new school, the teacher asks to write like a regular test, "on regular tests, teachers had trusted

Maggie enough to allow her to whisper to Anna the questions on the board" (*LFTS* 193). Hence, Anna becomes worried and unhappy about the test. She got disappointed with Mrs. Schumacher, "Maybe Mrs. Schumacher could phone him and tell him about the way she always typed exams out on a primer-type typewriter" (*LFTS* 194).

Subsequently, Anna was granted permission to utilise a typewriter during her exam, as "a teacher pointed out your problem at the last staff meeting and offered to type out all your examination papers on a primer-type typewriter" (*LFTS* 194). Consequently, Anna felt contented upon receiving this news and wished to express her gratitude to the teacher who assisted her in fulfilling her examination requirements. It was then that Anna learned of Mr. Lloyd, a teacher at her institution, who acknowledged her struggles with composing a traditional exam. Anna expressed her appreciation by stating, "'I came to thank you,' Anna said, all in a rush, her cheeks scarlet. 'For typing out the exams so I can read them. I mean, I was really worried, and I didn't know what to do'" (*LFTS* 196).

Anna experiences immense joy and excitement upon discovering that Mr. Lloyd is also a person with a disability. Mr. Lloyd holds a fondness for Anna's inquisitiveness, prompting him to impart his life experiences and motivate her to excel academically, stating, "I myself was privately tutored during my high school years. College was much easier because the teaching was done through lectures. Like yourself, Miss Solden, I acquired a better-than-average memory" (*LFTS* 197). Additionally, Mr. Lloyd encourages Anna by expressing his belief in her potential, stating, "You should go far, Miss Solden. I believe you have a good mind" (*LFTS* 197). He aspires for Anna to utilise her education as a means to lead a fulfilling life.

Anna experiences intense fear and difficulty coping with the idea of war, feeling that it is a distant and abstract concept that has yet to affect her personally, "Nothing in her life had changed to give the word 'war' reality of her" (*LFTS* 23). However, with the support of

her family, Anna is able to adjust to her new school environment and begin to thrive, "Although she was still feeling strange about the war, Anna had started to feel better about school" (*LFTS* 22).

Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by war. As the world prepares for World War II, Anna prepares to attend public high school. However, her anticipation is disrupted by the announcement on her father's radio that "Canada is at war with Germany" (*LFTS* 4). Anna knows the difficulties of an individual with disability and that war is a factor augmenting disability. Being a family that had recently migrated from Germany, the Soldens are afraid and saddened by the news.

Anna's father expresses anxiety about allowing his children to attend school because of their German surnames. Meanwhile, a teacher at the school practices discrimination against students who share this same characteristic. Rudi finds himself grappling with the decision to enlist, as he is conflicted about the prospect of fighting against his own countrymen, even though he harbours animosity towards Hitler:

Of course, there was some fighting going on in Europe. Over the last many months, Anna had seen it in newsreels at the movies. They showed Adolf Hitler screaming speeches at wildly cheering mobs, German troops goose-stepping and giving the now famous 'Heil, Hitler!' salute, and German forces moving across borders to occupy neighboring countries. (*LFTS* 7)

In an attempt to maintain her sense of exaltation, Anna struggles to come to terms with the harsh reality of war. Despite her efforts to keep the war in mind, it remains difficult for her to comprehend. With no news of the war coming to an end, Anna begins to feel that nothing significant is happening. Little notes, "A wild hope sprang up in Anna" (*LFTS* 13), reflecting Anna's desperation for a positive outcome. As a child with a disability, Anna finds it particularly challenging to cope with the stress and difficulty brought on by the war. She

expresses her thoughts, saying, "Germany is so far away to me now... It would be different if I lived in Poland" (*LFTS* 112). Anna's mature and thoughtful perspective leads her to feel guilty about the German people, and she ultimately struggles with feelings of normalcy.

During an assembly at Anna's school, Mr. Appleby, a public speaker, delivers a speech to a large audience of young students. Initially, Anna is disinterested in the speech and unaware of its purpose. However, with her concerns about the war in Germany weighing on her mind, she eventually becomes more attentive. Through his speech, Mr. Appleby effectively conveys the harsh realities of war and the difficulties faced by many as a result:

Wartime is a time of despair and fear and loneliness and loss. Not many of us have had to face those things yet, but before this war is done most of you will have been touched by tragedy. Some of you may well be called on to fight in the armed services. You will all hear of hatred, violence, and slaughter. Some of you may already have experienced special tension- those of you with relatives in the British Isles or in Europe. (*LFTS* 156)

Anna draws inspiration and renewed optimism for her life from Mr. Appleby's speech. The address serves as a source of internal strength that aids Anna in navigating her difficulties. Mr. Appleby delivers a succinct and impactful motivational speech that captures his audience's attention and empowers them to surmount obstacles and reach their aspirations. Anna is surprised by Mr. Appleby's intimate understanding of her character, as he urges her to 'listen for the singing':

To me, the world is like that unhatched egg, older people, embittered by suffering, will tell you that it is rotten, that it is not worth saving. But you must warm the world the way the mother bird warms her egg. Warm it back into life and love. It is terribly important that young people like you listen for the singing. (*LFTS* 158)

Anna encounters numerous obstacles in her life, such as starting at a new school and worrying about her brother's well-being. Furthermore, Anna's family experiences alarming circumstances, including the Nazis' detention of her beloved Aunt Tania and her brother Rudi's loss of vision after serving in the Navy.

Anna's family is profoundly impacted by the incident during the war, particularly since it results in Rudi's visual impairment. As per the doctor, "it was some freak accident. Cleaning fluid got splashed into his face. Both eyes were badly burned. When the burns heal, there will be scars. He holds out no hope that Rudi will be able to see again" (*LFTS* 231). Rudi's aspiration to join the Navy and contribute to the war effort was motivated by his affection for his nation, and the outcome is both unforeseen and unjust.

After returning home from the Navy, Rudi surprises everyone by appearing to be unaffected by his visual impairment, as stated in the quote, "Rudi with dark glasses on and a cane in his hand, smiling, saying the right things" (*LFTS* 233-34). Nevertheless, despite Rudi's positive attitude, those around him remain concerned about the impact of this unexpected tragedy on his life.

Anna perceives Rudi's behaviour as not being normal, as he appears to have disconnected emotionally from their family, and his blindness seems to have affected his feelings as well, as expressed in the quote, "He's gone away from us inside. His feelings are blind too" (*LFTS* 234). Despite this, Rudi never speaks about his impairment or asks for help, which surprises the Solden family. Rather he learns new things for the survival and makes him able to participate in everything beyond difficulties.

Richard Gibson's article titled "Graphic Illustration of Impairment: science fiction, Transmetropolitan and the social model of Disability" defines the social model of disability perspectives as focusing on goals not barriers in the society, "As with practically any facet of life, what we are able to achieve is limited by the availability of resources required to reach a

goal, most commonly, but not exclusively, financial, and this is the same with reducing and eliminating barriers” (16).

Likewise, in this book also, Rudi focuses on his work rather than on his challenges. This makes him confident to lead a stress-free life. However, Anna understands the reason for Rudi's silence, “Anna knew he was not. She could hear him in the night when he thought everyone was sleeping. Often, he paced back and forth, back and forth in his room, with no light on. Anna knew he did not need light but still it made it all the more terrible somehow. Then she heard him crying” (*LFTS* 234-35).

Rudi is caught off-guard by the loss of his vision. Despite enlisting in the Navy for a noble cause, tragedy strikes his life, leaving him struggling to adjust to a world that has suddenly become difficult and unfamiliar. Bunbury in the article “Unconscious bias and the medical model: How the social model may hold the key to transformative thinking about disability discrimination” in *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law* notes, “Society is willing to accept some limitations but not all of them, the limitations which society cannot meet are labelled as a disability which does not assist in challenging attitudes towards disability” (31). Though Rudi appears composed and resilient to others, Anna bears witness to the toll that his hardships have taken on him, as he would weep every night after the incident. Anna likens Rudi's tears to the songs of birds. Despite these challenges, Rudi perseveres and eventually emerges stronger. Mr. McNair informs Anna of Rudi's progress in his new life, sharing that “he had really mastered Braille and had learned to move about more independently” (*LFTS* 260).

In the meantime, Rudi makes strides in learning to live independently, despite his disability. Anna proves to be a significant source of support for Rudi after the tragedy that befell him, going above and beyond to meet his needs, as “She, because of and in spite of her poor vision, seemed to have a sixth sense when it came to his needs” (*LFTS* 260). Though

they are siblings, Anna's care for Rudi stems not just from their familial relationship, but also from their shared belonging to the same community of individuals with disabilities.

Anna is determined to help Rudi regain his confidence and strength, as she states, "I want to rescue Rudi" (*LFTS* 239). She strives to become a stronger support system for him despite his visual impairment. Mrs. Schumacher admires Anna's dedication and compares her to how she was in the beginning, "You were extremely prickly at first, I must admit ... I thought of you, I remember, as a little porcupine with all its quills sticking out" (*LFTS* 239). Anna's ultimate goal is to alleviate Rudi's worries and ensure his well-being.

Anna's experience at a specialised school for the visually impaired equips her with the knowledge of using assistive technology to access reading materials. In this story, Anna expands her knowledge by learning to use Braille and a talking book machine with the guidance of Mrs. Schumacher, her teacher. After transitioning to a regular school, Anna continues to benefit from the use of assistive devices, and when her brother also loses his sight, she is able to help him read books using the same technology. As per the social model of disability, as discussed in *The Disability Studies Reader, 5th ed.* by Davis, assistive devices play a crucial role in overcoming barriers to learning. Davis explains that "people with the same impairment may require different solutions, such as visually impaired individuals who may access text through Braille, large print, audio tape, or electronic files" (200).

Anna, being considerate of Rudi's reluctance to accept help without reciprocation, proposes a mutually beneficial agreement where she would teach Rudy Braille in exchange for his assistance with mathematics. Upon Rudi's loss of vision, Anna takes on the role of his Braille teacher, as mentioned in the quote "I can teach you the Braille Alphabet, which is how everybody begins, after school- if you help me with my math, that is" (*LFTS* 246). Although Rudi is highly skilled in mathematics, as acknowledged by Mr. McNair who states, "Rudi is the finest mathematics scholar I ever taught" (*LFTS* 170), Anna finds the subject challenging.

Anna takes the initiative to investigate and utilise assistive technology to facilitate Rudi's learning. Collaborating with Mrs. Schumacher, Anna teaches Rudi Braille while Rudi reciprocates by assisting her with Math, creating a mutually supportive relationship that bodes well for their future. To begin their Braille lessons, they use a slate, stylus, and stiff paper. Despite this, Rudi initially experiences apprehension and fear, "Rudi was horrified when he realized that, since he had to poke the holes through the paper from the back, he had to reverse all the letters he had just mastered, to make them come out the right way around. But when he actually tried doing it, it was not as difficult as he had imagined" (*LFTS* 251-52).

Over time, Rudi gains insight into assistive technology through Anna's experience. The UNICEF discussion paper, "Assistive Technology for Children with Disabilities: Creating Opportunities for Education, Inclusion and Participation," asserts that appropriate assistive technology can enable active participation among children with disabilities, stating, "Assistive technology for children needs to be appropriate for them" (22). Thus, it can serve as a valuable aid for students with disabilities in their learning.

Anna also is affected by stereotypical attitude of the society. For instance, Miss Marshall, Anna's teacher, assumes that Anna's vision is poor but not that poor. Miss Marshall suggests that Anna should try knitting, assuming that visually impaired individuals are excellent knitters, without asking Anna if she knows how to knit. Anna becomes upset and troubled by this, as she is not given a chance to express her opinion on the matter. As the text states, "Without giving Anna a chance to express an opinion, the teacher went to the back of the room and rummaged in her cupboards. Before long, she emerged triumphant with a pair of knitting needles and a ball of dingy gray wool" (*LFTS* 149). This situation highlights the assumption and stereotype that visual disability are naturally good at knitting, as mentioned by Miss Marshall when she says, "Blind people are wonderful knitters" (*LFTS* 140).

Anna's education not only enhances her understanding of others but also instils confidence within her. This newfound confidence enables her to participate in the grade twelve oratorical contest, where she memorises the poem "In Flanders Fields" along with her Canadian peers. In her recitation of the poem, Anna confidently proclaims, "In Flanders fields, the poppies blow... Between the crosses, row on row... We shall not sleep, though poppies grow... In Flanders fields" (*LFTS* 154).

Anna's education facilitates social inclusion and imparts valuable lessons on adapting to new environments. In her studies, Mrs. Schumacher introduces Anna to the famous lines from *A Tale of Two Cities* which Anna feels resonate with her life, "It was the worst of times, it was the best of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief..." (*LFTS* 243). Through her determination and acquired skills, Anna overcomes her disability and shines in society, with unwavering support and encouragement from her parents.

Over time, Anna experiences growth in her social and emotional development. She gains the ability to navigate and overcome difficulties on her own. As a result, she is able to move past any lingering grievances from her past, as evidenced by her reflection, "But Anna did not think of such things. She did not remember being Awkward Anna" (*LFTS* 201). The Solden family's migration to Canada offers Anna a chance at a better life, as she finds a supportive community and access to education, which help guide her towards her path and destination.

Anna faces numerous obstacles throughout her life, particularly in comparison to Rudi. As a child, prior to becoming aware of her disability, she is subjected to criticism and ridicule from both her siblings and peers at school. In the early stages of their relationship, Rudi also struggles with accepting Anna due to her impairment, even excluding and resenting her at times.

AE Beckett and T Campbell address the evolution of the social model of disability in their article titled, “The social model of disability as an oppositional device” states that if society is welcoming disability then there is a way for inclusion, “As the social model acted to tell people who they are (disabled people), and position the present (a disabling society) as unjust, it allowed people to recognise one another as members of the same struggle, with shared values, coming together to dismantle disabling barriers and to build an inclusive and enabling society.” In this novel, it wasn't until Rudi matured into adulthood that he was able to truly understand Anna and her disability, leading to greater acceptance and inclusion between them. Despite facing these challenges, Anna perseveres and even learns difficult subjects such as math from Rudi. Her experiences instill in her a deep understanding of the importance of inclusive education and settings.

The advantages of inclusion are manifold, extending beyond the well-being of children with special needs and their families. Establishing an inclusive environment is a joint responsibility of both the family and the school. The Solden demonstrates a greater comprehension of Anna's needs and acts accordingly in the novel. As noted in *Special Educational Needs and Disability: The Basics* by Wearmouth:

With inclusion in place, children with special needs are provided equal opportunity to participate in the same types of programs and activities as children without special needs. Some of the benefits of inclusion for children with (or without) disabilities are friendship skills, peer models, problem solving skills, positive self-image, and more accepting of differences. (19)

In conclusion, Jean Little's exploration of immigration, adaptation, social inclusion, and human relationships through the character of Anna Solden in her novels, *From Anna* and *Listen for the Singing*, underscores the profound impact of education amidst the challenges of migration, disability, and familial dynamics. As depicted vividly in these narratives,

education serves as a cornerstone for navigating the complexities of integration into a new society, particularly for individuals like Anna facing physical and mental hurdles. In light of research highlighting the significant implications of migration on well-being, especially for those with disabilities, the role of education emerges as crucial in fostering resilience, empowerment, and social inclusion.

By delving into Anna's experiences and familial dynamics within the context of education, this study sheds light on the transformative power of learning in overcoming barriers and forging connections in diverse cultural landscapes. Thus, education emerges not only as a means of academic attainment but as a catalyst for personal growth, community integration, and the pursuit of a more inclusive society.