

## Chapter II

### Navigation from angles to access

In our view, it is society which disables physically impaired people. (qtd. in Oliver 42)

In the forthcoming chapter titled "Navigation from Angles to Access," delve into a comprehensive analysis of Jean Little's novels, *Mine for Keeps* and *Spring Begins in March*, with a particular focus on physical barriers. These literary works intricately capture the experiences of children and young adults confronting disabilities, prominently featuring Sally Copeland as the central character. Sally's narrative arch provides a compelling lens through which the novels vividly depict the multitude of obstacles individuals with disabilities encounter in their daily lives. From adjusting to unfamiliar surroundings to striving for autonomy and challenging societal norms, Sally's journey illuminates the complex dynamics of adaptation, independence, and societal acceptance and inclusion.

The intricate web of physical barriers within the social model of disability unfolds to reveal a complex landscape demanding nuanced solutions. Andrew Spieldenner and Elena Anadolis, in "Pedagogy, Disability, and Communication," emphasise a collaborative approach, stating, "Universally designing a classroom or healthcare facility must no longer be exclusively limited to the provision of access" (98). This resonates deeply in the pursuit of dismantling physical barriers, highlighting a shared responsibility among individuals, educators, and institutions to transcend mere accommodations and establish an environment fostering inclusivity.

Rachel Adams, in *Keyword for Disability Studies*, dissects the layers of 'access' and its expansive connotations. Reflecting on Bess Williamson's definition, Adams notes that access encompasses more than physical entry, "Figuratively, however, it can suggest a much broader set of meanings linked to a more inclusive society" (52). This expanded view

challenges the conventional perception of barriers as solely physical hindrances, emphasising the imperative for societal transformation to achieve genuine inclusion.

Meekosha and Dowse, in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, broaden the scope of accessibility within a human rights framework, recognising its relevance to diverse marginalised groups. Adam further contextualises historical struggles, drawing a parallel between the fight for physical access and broader societal histories of segregation. Tobin Seiber's psychological analysis in *Disability Theory* underscores that physical barriers not only obstruct movement but also create psychological and social disconnects. This interconnectedness stresses the need for comprehensive strategies to eliminate physical barriers and engender authentic societal inclusivity.

This chapter delves into the profound significance of education for children with disabilities, while also delving into the potential barriers that may impede their progress. Specifically, the focus centers on the realm of Special Education, exploring the advantages and disadvantages of Inclusive Education, examining social integration, identity formation, human interactions, and the societal obstacles that hinder their overall inclusion. These topics assume a significant magnitude, as individuals with disabilities are integral to these vital discussions.

In Jean Little's novels *Mine for Keeps* and *Spring Begins in March*, the author powerfully underscores the significance of education in the lives of children with disabilities by introducing the character of Sarah Jane Copeland, also known as Sally Copeland. Little's portrayal of Sally offers a highly positive depiction of living with a disability, accentuating the physical and social transformations experienced by children and individuals facing such challenges. Moreover, the novels intricately weave the theme of triumphing over obstacles and adversity. This chapter will extensively examine Little's novels, focusing on the character

of Sally, her family dynamics, and her friendships, in order to underscore the crucial role of education and inclusion.

Throughout the novels, Sally encounters numerous hurdles on her journey, including transitioning from a specialised-care school to her home, mastering self-dressing, adapting to a new school environment, and acquiring knowledge despite her disability. In her relentless pursuit of forming a friendship with someone her age and training a dog, Sally exhibits unwavering determination and resilience in the face of adversity. Additionally, the novels introduce other characters with disabilities who similarly confront discrimination and daily challenges, further emphasising the formidable obstacles faced by individuals with disabilities.

Collectively, these novels stand as a potent representation of the experiences of children and young adults living with disabilities, shedding light on the immense difficulties they encounter as well as the strength and fortitude they possess in confronting adversity. By featuring characters like Sally, the novels seek to foster understanding, empathy, and inclusive attitudes towards individuals with disabilities, while simultaneously raising awareness about the multifaceted issues they confront in society.

The social model of disability presents a compelling theoretical framework that challenges the conventional perception of disability as an individual medical or biological matter. Instead, it views disability as a socially constructed phenomenon. The social model of disability is described in Michael J. Prince's article, "Inclusive City Life: Persons with Disabilities and the Politics of Difference." Along with other thinkers, he expresses his opinions. As previously stated, he cites Crawford's opinions on the social model. Crawford, a theorist acknowledges that cultural developments, such as the creation of socially constructed surroundings, make people more disabled than they are by actual impairments, "The social model of disability emphasizes how people with impairments are disabled by the failure of

societal arrangements to accommodate their needs.” According to this model, disability is caused by the way society is structured and the barriers that individuals with disabilities encounter in their daily lives. These barriers encompass physical obstacles, such as inaccessible buildings, as well as societal attitudes and prejudices that restrict the opportunities and freedoms of people with disabilities.

The social model of disability seeks to dismantle and transform these barriers, aiming to create a more inclusive and equitable society. It emphasises the importance of empowering individuals with disabilities to fully participate in all aspects of life, including education, employment, and community involvement. Additionally, it calls for a shift in attitudes and perceptions, advocating for the understanding of disability as a facet of human diversity rather than a personal tragedy or burden. Lijuan Wang observes, “The social model also addresses disability problems as a result of the social constraints through attitudinal barriers and lack of accommodation” (4). Therefore, social model takes into account the societal attitudes towards disability.

When examining Sally's struggles for education and social inclusion, it is essential to utilise the lens of the social model of disability. This model serves as a tool and framework to comprehend the interplay between disability and society. In her book *Disability, Inclusion, and Inclusive Education*, Sailaja Chennat quotes Michael Oliver's views on disability, highlighting that the social model is a "practical tool, not a theory, an idea, or a concept" in identifying the societal barriers to inclusion and liberating disabled individuals” (6). Therefore, analysing these novels through the social model becomes crucial in addressing questions related to education, social inclusion, and identity.

The Copeland family consists of four children, among whom Sally is the youngest and the sole individual affected by Cerebral Palsy. Despite their tender age, the other three children - Melinda, Kent, and Meg - display affection and support towards Sally, treating her

on par with the rest of the family. However, owing to their limited understanding due to their youth, they do not fully grasp the complexities of Sally's condition and the daily challenges she confronts.

Nevertheless, the Copeland family successfully establishes an environment that fosters inclusivity and support for Sally. They ensure that she is not excluded or made to feel isolated, valuing her education to the same extent as that of her siblings. The Copelands recognise the significance of Sally's education and make concerted efforts to provide her with the best possible opportunities, undeterred by her disability. This unwavering commitment from the family demonstrates their dedication to creating an inclusive and supportive atmosphere for Sally, where she is cherished and treated with respect. In essence, the Copelands serve as an exemplary model of a caring and supportive family, placing utmost importance on the education and well-being of all their children, regardless of their individual abilities.

Jean Little effectively portrays the disability of cerebral palsy through the character Sally, exemplifying the challenges she faces due to her condition. As quoted from the CDC, "Cerebral Palsy (CP) is a group of disorders that affect a person's ability to move and maintaining balance and posture. CP is the most common motor disability in childhood. Cerebral means having to do with the brain. Palsy means weakness or problems with using the muscles." Sally, as a representation of CP, encounters feelings of disparity and exclusion.

Sally's physical appearance reflects the impact of her condition, presenting a simple and clumsy demeanour. She wears garments with buttons and zippers, highlighting the fine motor skill difficulties she experiences. Her short hair and inability to braid it like her siblings, Melinda and Meg Copeland, further emphasise the limitations imposed by her condition. Sally consistently relies on leg braces and crutches to aid her mobility, allowing her to move more independently. It is evident that she cannot walk with the same steadiness

as others, necessitating the use of assistive devices. Sally's father acknowledges this reality, stating, "In one small detail, you are different. You have a motor handicap. That seems like a lot more than a small detail to you though" (*MFK* 32). Despite these apparent differences, Sally's character defies notions of inferiority or inadequacy.

Through the depiction of Sally, Little effectively communicates the hardships faced by individuals with cerebral palsy, shedding light on their experiences of disparity and exclusion. By emphasising Sally's appearance and the challenges imposed by her condition, Little effectively conveys the unique struggles endured by those with cerebral palsy. It is crucial to recognise that these differences do not diminish Sally's worth or value in any way, serving as a testament to the resilience and strength exhibited by individuals like her.

The provision of special education is not just beneficial but essential for children with disabilities, as it utilizes specialised strategies, methodologies, and educational settings to facilitate their learning process. As stated in an article titled "Importance of Special Education" from *Allison Academy*, the objective of special education is to provide children with the necessary support to enable them to progress and acquire a high-quality education. Additionally, special education plays a crucial role in promoting the participation of children with disabilities in various extracurricular activities.

In the novel, Sally experiences a range of positive emotions, including happiness, comfort, and inclusion at the Special Care School, where she receives dedicated assistance and support from teachers and peers. The school creates a welcoming atmosphere and offers resources such as assistive tools to aid in her learning. According to the social model of disability studies, the school's approach to Sally's education prioritises the curriculum rather than focusing solely on her disability. This allows her to learn and grow alongside her peers without encountering difficulties or discrimination. The statement in the novel, "At school, there was always somebody there to help with the hard parts" (*MFK* 16), emphasises the vital

role of the support and resources provided by the Special Care School in fostering an inclusive and accommodating learning environment for Sally.

According to Audri Sandoval Gomez and Aja McKee in their article titled "When Special Education and Disability Studies Intertwine: Addressing Educational Inequities Through Process and Programming," published on the website *Frontiers*, examining special education practices through a social model of disability with a focus on ability and access can challenge the existing narrative. When impairment is viewed as a difference rather than a deficit, educators are compelled to consider alternatives to pedagogy and programming. This perspective allows educators to prioritise access to curricula rather than placing the burden solely on students to overcome their disabilities.

Special education enables Sally to learn effectively by providing her with tailored instruction that meets her unique needs. As Professor W. L. Heward explains in his article "Introduction to Special Education," published on *Newzhook*, special education involves individually planned, systematically implemented, and carefully evaluated instruction aimed at helping exceptional children achieve the greatest possible personal self-sufficiency and success in their present and future environments. In the novel, Sally's parents make the conscious decision to enrol her in a special care school for her elementary education, acknowledging her difficulties in understanding her disability. The special education curriculum provided by the school is specifically designed to meet Sally's unique needs and assist her in achieving the highest level of personal self-sufficiency and success in her present and future environments.

Sally, who is affected by Cerebral Palsy, attends the Allendale School, a special-care institution for children with disabilities. This school provides extensive support and assistance to children with disabilities, with a dedicated staff of human assistants available to meet their needs. The children at this school develop strong relationships with their teachers

and caregivers, as they heavily rely on them for daily tasks. As described in the novel, "People hurried everywhere, helping to undo buttons and brush teeth, taking children to the toilet, bringing them back, dodging wheelchairs, unbuckling braces and giving orders which went unheard in the uproar" (*MFK* 7). Sally, in particular, is entirely dependent on her teacher, Miss Jonas, for dressing, undressing, and preparing for bed. Consequently, she forms a strong attachment to her and deeply misses her when she is no longer at the Allendale School.

Sally's pursuit of education leads her to separate from her family, with only two opportunities per year to visit them during the holidays, as mentioned in the novel, "There had been two holidays every year, one at Christmas and one in the summer" (*MFK* 3). Despite these visits, Sally experiences a deep sense of homesickness and yearns to live with her family and have a more typical life. This longing is expressed in the novel, "Almost ever since she could remember, she had longed, more than anything, to live at home" (*MFK* 3). Finally, Sally's wish is granted when her parents decide to move her to an inclusive school closer to home. However, when the time comes for her father to take her home for the last time, Sally feels the pain of parting from the Allendale school.

Miss Jonas, recognising the benefits of inclusive education, encourages Sally's mother to enrol her in a regular elementary school. She as a teacher, sincerely interested in Sally's welfare. Anke De Boer et al. acknowledge, "Teachers are seen as key persons to implement inclusive education" (1). Sally's mother shares this idea with Sally upon her return home, stating, "She knows a lot about you, though. She says that you'll find out how to make friends of your own and that you will learn more about life than you could ever learn in a school which is only for children with handicaps like yours" (*MFK* 30). These words from Miss Jonas serve as a motivating factor for Sally.

Miss Jonas is aware that Sally has never attended a mainstream school, where she would have the opportunity to interact with children without disabilities. This lack of experience limits Sally's understanding of the world, and in order to enhance her life, integration into a regular school setting is necessary. According to Mary L. Trepanier-Street and Jane A. Romatowski in their article "Young Children's Attitude Toward the Disabled: A Classroom Intervention Using Children's Literature," *Springer* "With the increasing inclusion of special needs children in regular classrooms, experiences that encourage positive attitudes toward the disabled are essential." Miss Jonas believes that the regular classroom would offer Sally the chance for full participation and an inclusive experience.

Having spent five years at the Allendale School for children with disabilities, Sally has grown accustomed to the comfort and security provided by its special care. While living in the hostel with other children facing similar challenges, she struggles to adapt to the lack of structure and routine when she returns home for holidays. The absence of the bell system disrupts her sleep, and she misses the companionship of her peers at the school, as described in the novel, "The thought of getting ready for bed in a strange house, the thought of facing days without a bell to tell her when to do things, the thought of not having the other girls around, suddenly piled up into what looked like a mountain of troubles to Sally" (*MFK* 7). She even finds herself preferring her room at the hostel over her own home, as it provides a greater sense of ease.

Sally's transition from a special-care school to a regular educational institution engenders a profound despair within her, inducing a lasting emotional distress. The absence of the Allendale School, which she dearly misses, exacerbates her distress. She finds herself reminiscing about her companions at the Allendale Special Care School, all of whom grapple with cerebral palsy, including Bonnie, Alice, Jane Ann, and Hilary, each with their unique challenges and complications. As their memories flood Sally's mind, it only adds to her

confusion, as she begins to perceive a multitude of distinct disabilities among them.

"Memories of other children crowded into Sally's mind, confusing her still further. They all had cerebral palsy, and yet it suddenly seemed to her that there were dozens of different handicaps among them" (*MFK* 15).

In their pursuit of providing better opportunities and assistance for their daughter with a disability, the Copelands decide to move to a new house. This new location is in close proximity to the Riverside Treatment Centre for Children with Motor Handicaps, where Sally will receive therapy, as mentioned in the quote "They had moved for her sake. Their new house was close to the Riverside Treatment Centre for Children with Motor Handicaps, where she would be going for her therapy" (*MFK* 6). Despite the Copelands' efforts to improve Sally's well-being, she struggles to fully accept the idea of a new living environment and feels uncertain about the move. Social adjustment is challenging for people with special needs in new environments. Discrimination against people with disabilities in the socially constructed society is one of the main characteristics of societal disruption discussed by Barnes et al. in *Disability Studies Today*:

The social model of disability is the rallying call for disability organizations identifying with the disabled people's movement. When disabled individuals encounter the social model, the effect is often revelatory and liberatory, enabling them, perhaps for the first time, to recognize most of their difficulty as socially caused. Disabling barriers in all areas of social life come into view - in housing, education, employment, transport, cultural and leisure activities, health and welfare services, civil and political rights, and elsewhere. (40)

Sally's father arranges for her to be flown home, taking into account the special needs and anxieties that children with disabilities may experience during air travel. As a precautionary measure, Sally always carries a card in her coat pocket with her name and

address, ensuring that she has identification in case she becomes lost. However, as she notices the card displaying her new address during the flight, a sense of fear and uncertainty overwhelms her regarding the upcoming move:

She experiences genuine fear, despite any attempts to scold herself for feeling this way. Gradually, she begins to comprehend the source of her uneasiness and the chill that permeates her inner being. It becomes clear that while she had wished and longed for the chance to return home, there was an assumption that it would remain a wish, a mere fantasy. (*MFK* 6)

Sally harbours reservations about the new address she glimpses on the card in her coat pocket. Her apprehension arises from the daunting prospect of adjusting to a novel environment and interacting with unfamiliar individuals, as indicated by the quote, "leaving the life you were used to and beginning a new one full of unfamiliar places and people" (*MFK* 6). Despite her disability, Sally hesitates to embrace the challenges of adapting to a different setting. Nevertheless, her family prioritises her well-being and education, which drives their decision to relocate to a new house. Her parents trusted mobility brings some good changes in the life of Sally. Sally's family wholeheartedly commit to this change, recognising its potential to provide Sally with improved opportunities and a better quality of life.

Sally's father envisions a more inclusive environment for Sally by proposing that she share a room with her younger sister, Meg, in the new house. In expressing his hope, he states, "I hope you won't mind sharing a room with Meg in the new house" (*MFK* 8). He firmly believes that this living arrangement will enable Sally to develop better social interactions and gain a deeper understanding of others, fostering her ability to socialise beyond her immediate family circle.

Similarly, Sally's mother eagerly anticipates her daughter's return and warmly embraces her upon arrival. The entire Copeland family is excited to welcome Sally back and wants her to feel a sense of belonging in their new home. However, upon entering the unfamiliar environment, Sally finds herself in a state of bewilderment. Mixed emotions of excitement and anxiety flood her being. Her mother promptly guides her to the room she will be sharing with Meg, aiming to provide Sally with companionship so that she does not feel isolated. Notably, having previously resided in a hostel at the Allendale school, where she shared a room with other girls, Sally might miss the camaraderie she experienced there. By arranging for Sally to share a room with Meg, her mother seeks to foster a friendly and supportive atmosphere for Sally's well-being. Although initially hesitant, Sally ultimately agrees to the arrangement, acknowledging, "Mine and Meg's" (*MFK* 13). Despite her feelings of inferiority stemming from her disability in comparison to Meg, Sally recognises the significance of this arrangement for her social development and emotional fulfilment.

Sally encounters her first major hurdle upon returning home, namely the task of dressing herself. At the Special-Care School, she had the support of helpers who assisted her with challenging buttons and zippers. However, her first morning at home proves to be a terrifying experience. Left to dress alone by her mother, Sally feels a deep sense of loneliness and uncertainty, leading her to burst into tears. When her mother enters the room, Sally cries out in frustration, "Don't you know I can't do it all by myself" (*MFK* 38). It is at this point that her mother draws attention to the clothes specially designed for her, featuring an elastic waist, a wide neck that is easy to slip over her head, and no buttons. Even the underwear has been tailored with extra-large leg holes, enabling Sally to dress herself independently. By creating such clothing, Sally's mother aims to promote her daughter's independence and eliminate any barriers that may hinder her daily activities.

Initially, Sally experiences a sense of prickliness and irritation at home due to the disruption in her routine and her growing feelings of helplessness. Having grown accustomed to constant assistance and support at the Allendale School, she expects her mother to cater to her every need. The teachers and caregivers at the school had always gone the extra mile to help her grasp even the simplest of tasks. Duque et al., quotes Anderson et al., “The study of the learning context and the school environment, which facilitates or hinders learning, has shown that the expectations from teachers and their attitudes toward children with special needs are some of the most influential elements” (2).

In her special care school, Sally depends upon the caretaker and teacher for her sustenance. As Sally reflects, "Sal thought hard. Until today, somebody else had always explained for her" (*MFK* 14). She justifies her reliance on others by attributing it to her cerebral palsy, stating, "Because I have cerebral palsy" (*MFK* 14). Consequently, when she doesn't receive the complete assistance, she is accustomed to, she feels a profound sense of helplessness.

The elimination of dependence on others is a critical step towards fostering inclusion and promoting inclusive education for children with disabilities. Hundert and colleagues conducted a comprehensive study in 1991 titled "Children with Disability in Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care," which demonstrated the superior outcomes for children with disabilities in inclusive settings compared to segregated environments. This decision, supported by assessments from teachers and parents, emphasises the importance of reducing reliance on others for the overall progress and development of children like Sally.

Assistive technology plays a pivotal role in achieving this goal by empowering individuals with disabilities to actively engage in various aspects of life. Sally's experiences in the novel exemplify the positive impact of assistive technology. Despite her challenges with walking, Sally utilises assistive devices such as a wheelchair and crutches to achieve

independent mobility. According to the *World Health Organisation* and UNICEF, assistive technology improves the functioning of people with disabilities and creates opportunities for their education, inclusion, and participation in society (9). By embracing assistive technology, Sally gains empowerment and becomes an active participant in diverse activities, reinforcing the benefits of reducing dependence and promoting inclusion for children with disabilities.

Sally's parents share this vision of reducing her dependence on others and facilitating her integration into the mainstream education system. The researcher, Monika puts it, "Most of the parents want their children to be welcomed into the real world and be given respect and resources which they need and deserve as is given to non-disabled children" (259). Sally's parents seek to provide her with greater autonomy and enhance her overall participation and engagement.

Sally's difficulty in transitioning away from the Special-Care School is rooted in her arduous struggle to accept an inclusive education. The prospect of embracing a regular educational setting proves daunting for her, impeding her ability to emerge from the security and familiarity of her time at the special-care facility. Despite the warm reception she receives from her family, Sally yearns to return to the comforting embrace of the Allendale School, where she was not only known but also spared from ever feeling abandoned. Her own words encapsulate her sentiment, "In spite of the feeling she had when Mother hugged her in the car, in spite of the beautiful room, in spite of Meg, in spite of all the years of waiting and wanting to go home to stay, Sally wanted to go back, back to where she was known and safe and never left alone for a minute. She wanted to go back to school!" (*MFK* 16). Ultimately, Sally reluctantly attends the regular school solely due to her parents' insistence.

Empathy plays a crucial role in fostering understanding, and it is within the pages of this novel that the Copeland parents truly exemplify this virtue. They demonstrate an acute comprehension of Sally's emotions and inner turmoil. Their desire for Sally to grasp the rationale behind her transition in education is evident when they explain, "we did think of moving to a big city instead, but I had my business here and we thought that we would have a treatment centre built long before this. We sent you to the best school we could afford and we worked hard toward persuading the community to build a treatment centre, and the moment the Centre was built we fetched you home" (*MFK* 31). Consequently, Sally's parents emerge as both empathetic and responsible guardians, fully attuned to the needs of their disabled child.

Sally's struggle to articulate her thoughts and feelings becomes a source of frustration, exacerbating her already challenging circumstances. The poignant plea of "Don't you know I can't do it all by myself?" (*MFK* 18) serves as a stark reminder of her struggles with self-expression. Her condition of cerebral palsy hampers her ability to accomplish certain tasks, leading to mockery from her siblings. The resultant discomfort and sense of inferiority permeate her own home, as she candidly confesses, "Never had Sarah Jane Copeland felt more muddled and miserable" (*MFK* 18). While the special-care school provided aides to assist Sally with her daily tasks, her mother insists on fostering independence at home, withholding assistance with dressing and feeding. This transition proves arduous for Sally, who has yet to acquire the necessary skills for self-reliance.

Within the confines of the novel, Kent's introduction of Piet to Sally unveils an additional dimension of disability representation. Piet, much like Sally, grapples with a disability, in his case, Rheumatic fever. Kent suggests that both Sally and Piet should attend the same school, claiming, "He's so special he can't even talk English! It's too ordinary for him" (*MFK* 28). This statement not only reveals Piet's language barrier as a recent migrant

from Holland but also exposes Kent's belittlement of him due to this very aspect.

Consequently, the narrative underscores the prevalence of negative attitudes and prejudices towards individuals with disabilities, as well as the limitations society often ascribes to them.

Piet, as a child affected by Rheumatic fever and facing the challenges of adapting to a new country, encounters discrimination and struggles with learning English. The environment fails to offer the acceptance and inclusivity he seeks. In response to Kent's derogatory behaviour, Sally's father advises him against judgment and mockery, emphasising the importance of not differentiating individuals based on their language abilities. To highlight the impact of language barriers, Sally's father employs irony by asking Kent to speak Dutch, stating, "Let's hear you speak some Dutch" (*MFK* 29). This serves as a poignant reminder that language difficulties can affect anyone and will not be a basis for ridicule.

Upon reflection, Kent acknowledges the error of his actions and receives a stern warning from his father, who implores him to refrain from repeating such behaviour. He aptly conveys, "Sometimes it is hard to like people, but to mock someone, as you did- that hurts you, Kent, far worse than it hurts the person you mock. I hope I never hear you do it again" (*MFK* 29). This dialogue serves as a critical reminder of the detrimental consequences of mocking others and highlights the importance of empathy and understanding.

Sally's parents and the advocates at the Allendale School fervently advocate for her right to receive education in an inclusive environment. They firmly believe that children with disabilities should have the opportunity to attend integrated schools and access education without any form of discrimination. *The International Journal of Technology and Inclusive Education* (IJTIE) article titled "Models of Inclusive Education: One Size Does Not fit All" highlights the importance of inclusive education, emphasising that it should encompass all children, regardless of their special or normal designation. Such an approach not only upholds human rights but also "embraces diversity" in today's globalised society (329).

Inclusive education not only enhances learning opportunities for all children, irrespective of disabilities, but also fosters a sense of belonging and friendship among all members of the community.

On Sally's first day at a new school, she finds herself in an unfamiliar environment, surrounded by strangers, and experiences a profound sense of unease. As Sally describes it, "she just had a feeling, a terrifying feeling of being pushed out into a world full of strangeness, of being pushed out into a world she was not ready to meet" (*MFK* 30). Considering that Sally has never previously been in a classroom with children without disabilities, it is only natural for her to feel isolated and uncomfortable in this unfamiliar setting.

In the Special-Care School, Sally does not encounter feelings of embarrassment or shame regarding her physical limitations, such as her use of crutches or a wheelchair. As highlighted by Lennard J. Davis in *The Disability Studies Reader*, an appropriate environment for wheelchair users entails features like ramps, dropped curbs, and smooth surfaces, "Wheelchair users need ramps, dropped curbs, and smooth surfaces" (200). In this special setting, where all classroom members share disabilities, Sally does not perceive herself as different from her peers. Furthermore, the availability of diverse forms of assistance tailored to individual needs ensures that Sally receives the necessary support without causing distress. Hence, Sally's experience of cerebral palsy in the Special-Care School does not hinder her well-being.

Conversely, in an integrated school, Sally becomes acutely aware of her disability, leading to feelings of self-consciousness and reluctance to interact with her peers. Establishing an inclusive classroom environment for students with disabilities can present challenges, and given Sally's novelty in this atmosphere, she feels uncomfortable and

disempowered within the classroom. Sally's cerebral palsy poses various difficulties within the classroom setting, such as:

She had to get her crutches stowed out of the way, and then undo the knee-locks on her braces and get turned around so that her feet were under the desk instead of sticking out blocking the aisle. The lock on the left brace jammed. Sally tugged at it angrily. Her fingers, stiff with tension and damp with perspiration, slipped on the smooth steel. She wiped her skirt, gave one more tug, and the lock clicked open. Her knees bent. She swung her feet under her desk and sighed thankfully. (*MFK* 39)

This passage highlights the physical barriers and difficulties that Sally encounters in the classroom, including manoeuvring her crutches, unlocking her braces, and navigating the physical space to take her seat. These difficulties can be attributed to her cerebral palsy and the lack of accommodations in the classroom. Further, the challenge in the inclusive classroom for Sally is to undo the knee locks without any helpers. Perhaps it takes some time for her to do it. She notices that except for her others are not doing it so. Now, Sally realises the noise that she makes while settling down in her place. In *NewsHook*, the article titled, "Some tips to make classrooms inclusive for children with cerebral palsy" Nandita Paul, a special educator discusses about the settings of an inclusive classroom, "Make schools accessible- Children with CP need a lot of space to move around. Make the classroom clutter free and minimize sensory overload and distraction. And having wheelchair ramps, lifts and handrails at washrooms and playgrounds is an important step." Hence, Sally feels everything seems to be new and difficult for her.

Sally faces the daunting task of adapting to the inclusive classroom environment, which presents unique challenges for her due to her cerebral palsy. In order to fully participate in the classroom, Sally must navigate the physical limitations imposed by her

condition. This necessitates additional support and accommodations from her teachers, such as adapting knee locks and minimising sensory overload, which may be unfamiliar to her. Janice Wearmouth, in her book *Special Educational Needs and Disability: The Basics*, underscores the significance of adopting a “constructivist approach” to learning for students with special needs, recognising that they may require additional care and effort from educators to comprehend and engage with the material effectively.

Wearmouth highlights the importance of empowering young learners in schools by providing them with a sense of control over their own learning. Understanding the purpose behind their education, making choices regarding their learning methods and timelines, all contribute to their sense of agency. As Wearmouth states, "Allowing learners some degree of choice in, or power over, what they learn and how they learn invites them to take control over their learning" (24). Although implementing this approach can be challenging in busy classrooms, offering students choices that can be accommodated within the school day not only gives them a sense of responsibility but also acknowledges their individual preferences, dislikes, and ideas.

Sally possesses a strong desire to acquire knowledge despite her impairments, which sometimes result in feelings of awkwardness and incompetence. Initially, she encounters difficulties in the classroom and undergoes a sense of inadequacy when comparing her educational progress with that of her peers. This harmful comparison perpetuates the misconception that individuals with disabilities are inherently inferior. Joseph Lathan, in his work "4 Proven Inclusive Education Strategies for Educators (Plus 6 Helpful Resources)," emphasises the significance of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. He states, "UDL is a set of principles that were born from the desire to offer every student an equal opportunity to learn, based on the idea that every person has their own unique and individual learning style." This perspective highlights that Sally's struggle to comprehend does not make

her a weak learner; rather, she simply requires additional time to grasp the meanings and concepts presented in the learning process.

Sally experiences discomfort in the classroom and finds it challenging to connect with her classmates in a regular school setting with both disabled and non-disabled students. She enters the class in a state of unease and sits down with fear and insecurity. As described, "She scrambled up, her cheeks as red as poppies" (34), Sally feels self-conscious about her disability and becomes depressed, causing her to withdraw from socialising with others in the classroom:

She was face to face with a roomful of strange children. After the first glance, some of them looked away uneasily, but many stared back at her, their eyes bright with curiosity. Sal did not stop to think that she had stared at Libby like this only a few minutes before. Too many faces, too many... she thought dizzily. (*MFK* 38)

Sally experiences a sense of intimidation and apprehension when faced with the prospect of being in a classroom filled with unfamiliar children, making it challenging for her to establish connections and form relationships. As a child with a disability, Sally feels uneasy and insecure about interacting with others, hindering her ability to initiate communication. It is a common experience for individuals, both with and without disabilities, to feel hesitation and difficulty when communicating with strangers.

Despite these initial challenges, Sally is fortunate to find like-minded friends who make her feel accepted and supported. One such friend is Libby, a classmate who takes the initiative to introduce herself to Sally with a warm and inviting smile. This genuine gesture of friendliness elicits a smile in return from Sally, as it is mentioned, "Sal smiled back. She could not have helped it. Libby's smile, as anyone could tell you, was something special" (*MFK* 36). However, Sally feels a sense of security and comfort in Libby's presence, enabling

her to overcome her initial discomfort and awkwardness in the classroom. Sevgi et al. admit, "Peers acceptance is considered crucial to gain positive outcomes for young children with disabilities in inclusive early childhood education" (1). Libby demonstrates a kind and sociable nature towards her friends with disabilities, expressing a genuine desire to form friendships and foster inclusivity within the classroom.

Furthermore, Libby introduces Sally to another classmate, Elsje Jameson, who recently immigrated from Holland. Libby highlights Elsje's intelligence and linguistic abilities, emphasising her positive qualities despite the challenges she faces as a result of migration. Elsje, like Sally, encounters various difficulties in the inclusive classroom, navigating the effects of adapting to a new language and culture.

Through Libby's introduction, Sally becomes aware of Elsje's migration background and her sibling, Piet. Intrigued by her classmates' stories, Sally expresses an interest in learning more about Elsje and her experiences. Sally also learns that Piet, despite facing criticism due to his limited English proficiency, is also a child with a disability. This revelation provides Sally with a deeper understanding of the shared challenges faced by herself and her classmates in the inclusive learning environment.

According to Dolly Singh's *Special Educational Needs: Strategies, Guidelines, and Initiatives*, the social model of disability challenges the notion that disability is solely an individual trait, asserting instead that it is a consequence of societal issues. Singh explains, "disability is viewed as a complex collection of conditions, many of which are created by the social environment, rather than an inherent characteristic of an individual" (7). In essence, disability is not solely about the impairments an individual possesses, but also about the barriers and limitations imposed upon them by society. Sally's case exemplifies the challenges she faces in her mental, physical, and social abilities, underscoring the urgent need for a more inclusive and accommodating society.

In the novel, *Mine for Keeps*, the characters Elsje and Sally face similar challenges of isolation and being seen as different. However, they both possess unique skills and talents that contribute to their community. Despite the difficulties they encounter, Elsje and Sally support each other and demonstrate the importance of inclusion and the valuable contributions individuals with disabilities can make.

Piet, Elsje's brother, faces significant challenges due to his disability. Not only does he experience marginalisation in his new environment, but he also carries the burden of his disability. These barriers include a lack of access to language courses and acceptance from others. It becomes clear that the challenges faced by migrants moving to a new country can be even more daunting for children with disabilities, as they must navigate societal obstacles in addition to their personal struggles. This underscores the crucial need for understanding and support for individuals with disabilities, especially in unfamiliar and foreign settings.

In the midst of their own challenges, Elsje and Sally find solace and strength in each other. Despite their differences, they form a bond based on mutual understanding and support. Elsje, with her strict Dutch upbringing, shares her knowledge and skills in dog training with her classmates, showcasing her expertise and making valuable contributions to the community. On the other hand, Sally, despite her cerebral palsy, surpasses her own expectations and proves that her disability does not define her capabilities. From dressing herself independently to making friends, training dogs, and providing assistance to others, Sally exemplifies resilience and the ability to overcome obstacles.

Through their interactions and support for one another, Elsje and Sally demonstrate the power of inclusion and the positive impact individuals with disabilities can have on their communities. They show that even those who are newcomers or face disabilities have much to offer, and their contributions are invaluable. The novel emphasises the importance of understanding and support for individuals with disabilities, particularly in new and unfamiliar

environments, as it paves the way for a more inclusive society where everyone's unique abilities are recognised and celebrated. Inclusion gives people with exceptional needs equality and a purpose in life. The lives of children with disabilities have significantly changed as a result of inclusion, particularly in the educational field.

In addition to her friends, Sally encounters her teachers in the new school, including Mr. Mackenzie, her teacher. Described as a tall and kind-faced individual with a strong presence, Mr. Mackenzie instils a sense of confidence in Sally. As she shakes hands with him, she stands straighter and feels braver (*MFK 36*). Mr. Mackenzie acknowledges Sally's fear and shares information about Elsje's background to help her feel more at ease. He subtly implies that, despite her difficulties, Elsje demonstrates a greater level of maturity compared to Sally, as Sally herself observes, "Yet there was something in her face that made Sal feel that Elsje was more grown-up than she was" (*MFK 40*).

In the context of Sally's experience during a math exam, Mr. Mackenzie, her teacher, administers an oral test. Sally, who struggles with shaky hands, finds it difficult to write down her answers quickly, leading to frustration and a fear of falling behind in math, despite knowing the correct responses. Ashamed of only completing a few questions, Sally instinctively shields her paper with her arm, attempting to hide her perceived lack of intelligence. As described, "Sal hunched over her paper. Instinctively, she put her arm around it as a shield, so that no one would see how stupid she was" (*MFK 44*). In an attempt to deceive, Sally resorts to copying the answers and marking them as correct. However, Elsje notices Sally's cheating and remains resolute in her disapproval, despite Sally's pleas. The passage states, "Elsje knew. Elsje had seen her cheating. Now, Elsje was going to tell. Sally gave the girl who now faced her one imploring look, but the scorn in Elsje's eyes did not soften" (*MFK 46*). Sally resorts to cheating as a means to appear proficient in math, avoiding potential reprimand from the teacher and embarrassment among her peers.

Within inclusive classrooms, it is crucial for teachers to display considerate and accountable behaviour towards students with disabilities. As highlighted in the *StudyQuirk* article, "Teachers play a key role in inclusive education." However, initially, Mr. Mackenzie falls short of meeting this expectation by displaying impoliteness and neglecting Sally's needs as a student with a disability. The article titled "Challenges of Inclusive Education" in *StudyQuirk* further explores this issue, stating that the "negative attitudes" of teachers towards disabled and marginalised children, as well as their inclusion in education, pose significant challenges and create barriers to inclusive education. Eventually, Mr. Mackenzie realises his shortcomings and apologises to Sally for his oversight. He begins to make efforts to understand and accommodate Sally's learning difficulties.

The pursuit of social inclusion aims to ensure that individuals with disabilities are granted equal opportunities to participate fully in society. Sally's parents actively work towards creating an environment that fosters equal opportunities for her. This involves facilitating meaningful relationships with family and friends and providing access to resources that help her navigate personal challenges. By doing so, they reinforce the idea that no one should be left behind. Social inclusion is fundamentally about promoting participation, equal opportunities, and empowerment for all members of society. By embracing this approach, the burden on children with disabilities and their families can be alleviated, allowing them to thrive and contribute to society.

Sally's father recognises the importance of inclusive education in providing her with advantages and opportunities. Indeed, she flourishes in a mixed-ability classroom, developing friendships and enhancing her learning abilities. The book *Children with Disability in Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Care* by the NSW Government Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation highlights the findings of Odom and Bailey, who discovered that children with various disabilities tend to have more interaction with their

“peers” in inclusive settings. This increased peer interaction has a positive impact on their social play and behaviour (5). It is evident that inclusive education offers numerous social benefits for children with disabilities.

Sally's relationships with her family, friends, classmates, and teacher are impacted as she struggles to adjust to her new reality. Her self-confidence diminishes, but she finds the strength to lead a fulfilling life. According to the book, "Once in a while, especially when she was in bed at night, she thought back to the way she had felt in those first days after she had come home to stay. It was like her favourite books where everything goes wrong and then turns around and comes right in the end" (*MFK* 168). Sally overcomes her feeling of exclusion by discovering her self-identity and education helps her see living with a disability in a more positive light.

Sally's parents are unwavering in their commitment to ensuring that their daughter receives the best possible care for her disability. They actively seek out medical treatment to address her specific needs, demonstrating their deep understanding of Sally's medical requirements. Recognising the importance of specialised expertise, Sally's mother arranges a visit with Dr. Eastman, a specialist in Toronto, to provide valuable insights into Sally's condition. During their appointment, Dr. Eastman takes the time to thoroughly evaluate Sally's abilities and engages in open communication with both Sally and her mother.

Dr. Eastman employs a metaphor to help Sally and her mother comprehend the complexities of her disability. He explains, "Your brain is like a motor... If you are going to be able to walk and use your hands well, you have to have the motor part of your brain in good working order besides having well-built arms and legs" (*MFK* 61). This analogy provides clarity on the interplay between the brain and physical abilities. Understanding the nature of her disability empowers Sally to grasp the diverse manifestations of “cerebral palsy,” leaving her filled with excitement and newfound knowledge (*MFK* 62).

Sally's father's actions regarding the new puppy demonstrate his unwavering determination to uplift and prioritise his daughter's happiness. Despite Sally initially showing no interest in purchasing a puppy, her father carefully observes her excitement when discussing the dog. Recognising this as an opportunity to bring joy into Sally's life, he decides to bring home a dog, fully aware of the positive impact it could have on her. His decision reflects his deep desire to make Sally feel important and cherished.

Upon bringing the puppy home, Sally's father goes the extra mile to ensure his daughter feels a sense of significance. He places the puppy behind Sally's seat in the car, symbolically showing that the dog is meant for her. This gesture emphasises Sally's importance within the family and reinforces her father's commitment to uplifting her spirits. By making Sally the primary recipient of the puppy, her father aims to strengthen her sense of self-worth and create a meaningful connection between her and the new pet.

Despite the initial challenges that arise when Susie, the puppy, reacts unfavourably to Sally, her father continues to support his daughter. He witnesses her feelings of misery and uses this opportunity to encourage Sally's empathetic nature. Sally's gentle touch and approach towards the frightened puppy not only alleviate Susie's distress but also surprise and bring happiness to her mother. In this instance, Sally's father reinforces Sally's importance by fostering an environment where her compassionate nature can shine.

Having a pet dog, as experienced by Sally, holds tremendous significance in promoting inclusion for children with disabilities. By providing equal access to the family and fostering a bond with Susie, Sally's sense of belonging is reinforced. Despite Susie's initial troublesome behaviour, Sally's calming presence transforms the pet's demeanour. Sally's realisation of this positive change illustrates the immense joy and happiness that can arise from inclusive experiences and strong bonds with pets, particularly for individuals with disabilities.

Sally's firm ownership over Susie becomes evident when Meg questions whether the dog belongs to both her and Kent. Sally confidently asserts that Susie is hers alone, declaring "She's mine" (*MFK* 69). Meg's surprise at this statement reflects the confidence and assertiveness Sally possesses. Despite her disability, Sally recognises the value of pet ownership and eagerly takes responsibility for caring for Susie. Her instant love and attachment to the dog, developed in a short span of time, showcase the inclusive nature of her family, which has afforded her equal access and opportunities.

The arrival of Susie brings a noticeable change in Sally's demeanour, evident to her peers Libby and Elsje. Sally's radiant expression indicates that she has found a close and kind companion. Sally's reflection on her future after leaving school reveals her excitement and hope, as she envisions a place discovered by Susie. Sally's family contributes to Susie's upbringing by providing various items for her comfort, including an old wooden box, a captain's chair, a stool, a ground sheet, and a worn Indian blanket. Sally's father even plans to install "rope handles and a bar on the fence" to enable Sally to move around independently (*MFK* 80). Sally eagerly extends an invitation to Libby and Elsje to visit her home, showcasing her enthusiasm and anticipation.

These events highlight the transformative power of pet ownership for individuals with disabilities, specifically in Sally's case. The inclusive environment created by her family and the close bond she shares with Susie not only improve Sally's quality of life but also boost her self-esteem and independence. The experiences she has with Susie underscore the importance of inclusion and support in enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Elsje's arrival at Sally's home accompanied by her well-trained dog, Willem, leaves Sally and the Copeland family impressed. The family's attention is captivated by Willem, who flawlessly follows Elsje's commands. In contrast, Susie feels intimidated by the presence of a stranger. Sally recognises "Willem's" impressive behaviour and desires to train Susie in a

similar manner. However, Kent and Sally's father doubt her abilities due to her disability, questioning her capacity to train Susie effectively. Their lack of confidence in Sally's training skills stems from her motor handicap, as she struggles to control Susie and maintain her own balance simultaneously (*MFK* 101).

Elsje introduces a dog training program called the "Pooch Academy," and Sally expresses a strong interest in joining to learn how to train Susie, just as Elsje has trained Willem. Sally is determined to challenge her father's belief that her disability renders her incapable of training a dog effectively. She strives to prove him wrong and demonstrate that she can overcome her challenges and succeed in training Susie.

Sally leads a busy life, juggling school, therapy at the treatment center, training Susie, and fulfilling her family responsibilities. Previously, she felt discouraged about returning home from Allendale school, but now she finds happiness in her life with Susie and her family. Sally holds the belief that difficulties ultimately lead to positive outcomes, similar to the stories she loves where, "It was like her favourite books where everything goes wrong and then turns around and comes right in the end" (*MFK* 168). She eagerly anticipates celebrating Christmas Eve with her siblings, especially with Susie, as it brings her immense joy.

Sally embraces her disability and seeks ways to adapt and cope with its challenges. She acknowledges her limitations but remains determined to grow and improve in all aspects of her life. Education plays a vital role in shaping Sally's character, establishing her identity, and fostering acceptance in society. Despite the hurdles she faces, Sally's persistence and efforts enable her to make meaningful contributions to her family and community. Her education in a mainstream setting provides opportunities for engagement with other children and promotes her social integration.

Jean Little's novel, *Spring Begins in March*, presents a compelling argument for the significance of education and inclusion. Building upon the narrative established in *Mine for Keeps*, the story revolves around Sally, her educational experiences within an inclusive setting, her adaptation to family life, and her pursuit of social integration. Notably, the novel also explores the challenges Sally encounters alongside her siblings, offering a candid and sincere portrayal of familial dynamics.

The author's honest depiction sheds light on the often-overlooked aspects of family life, where parents tirelessly strive to improve Sally's circumstances while simultaneously grappling with the needs and concerns of their other children. The Copeland family serves as a representative of numerous families who endure similar struggles within their households and beyond. By delving into these complexities, the narrative underscores the growth and personal development of Sally as she learns to embrace and manage her disability. Ultimately, this journey leads to her successful integration into an inclusive living environment alongside her family.

The novel *Spring Begins in March* also features Sally's younger sister Meg Copeland. Meg often contrasts her own academic performance with Sally's, who despite having cerebral palsy, excels in her studies. The concept of "Institutional disablism," as described by Sailaja Chennat in *Disability, Inclusion, and Inclusive Education*, refers to societal structures and practices that exclude individuals with disabilities, including barriers to education. Sally faces physical and mental obstacles in her pursuit of a mainstream education.

The Copeland family strongly supports the idea of inclusive education for their daughter, Sally, and believe that it will bring about significant positive changes in her life. This belief aligns with the provisions outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which was enacted in 2004. Despite the challenges and difficulties that inclusive

education can present, the Copeland family remains steadfast in their support for Sally's education in a mainstream setting.

However, despite the support of her family and the provisions outlined in the IDEA, Sally still faces many struggles and difficulties at the beginning of her inclusive education journey. As noted in the article "10 Reasons to Support Inclusive School Communities for ALL Students", "inclusive education" can be challenging for schools to implement, and this is reflected in the challenges that Sally faces. Nevertheless, with the help and support of her educators and classmates, Sally is eventually able to feel more comfortable and confident in her inclusive education setting.

The Copelands aim for Sally to become self-sufficient and avoid relying on others. According to the quote, "Although she would never run freely as the others did, never, in fact, manage without some support, she had been helped by therapy and by surgery until now, she no longer needed to wear her old cumbersome leg braces and had even graduated to wrist crutches" (*SBIM* 11), Sally feels different and uncomfortable compared to her siblings who are able to walk, dress, and learn without assistance. Despite her improved quality of life due to better care and resources, the use of assistive devices sets her apart and makes her feel inferior while at home.

Sally, with her disability, performs exceptionally well in school and consistently earns high grades. This achievement brings pride and happiness to her parents. Initially, Sally's parents were discouraged by her condition, but as she progresses to high school, she not only excels academically but also demonstrates good behaviour. Sally values education and works hard to overcome challenges to receive an inclusive education. Both Sally and her parents place a strong emphasis on her education for her overall well-being and future prospects.

Education is an indispensable and critical aspect for the growth and development of all children; however, some children may face difficulties in learning due to physical and

emotional barriers. In such scenarios, teachers and parents play a crucial role by offering additional support, encouragement, and motivation to help these children improve their learning abilities. The Copeland parents in the novel serve as a model of care and support, treating each of their children equally and exhibiting responsibility and kindness towards them. They go to great lengths to ensure Sally's life is inclusive and similar to that of her siblings.

The struggles within the Copeland family highlight the complex dynamics surrounding Meg's difficulties and Sally's cerebral palsy. Meg's parents have observed her withdrawal from social interaction and academic challenges compared to her siblings, emphasising the importance of diversity and individual learning styles in education. As an adolescent, Meg often feels uncomfortable, expressing her concerns about not being liked by others, which deeply affects her mother. This discomfort leads Meg to resist sharing a room with her siblings despite efforts to create inclusivity for Sally.

Sharing a room with Meg has a negative impact on Sally, who perceives Meg's behaviour as chaotic and uncooperative, making her feel inferior. Sally's discomfort is compounded by the fact that Meg does not share her disability, causing a lack of understanding and connection between them. Their mother, Emily, hopes that they will discover the deep love they have for each other and put an end to the harm they cause each other.

Emily strives to foster a friendly and kind relationship between her daughters to create a comfortable and inclusive environment for Sally. Despite her efforts, Sally and Meg continue to hold negative feelings towards each other. Consequently, Emily decides to move Sally into a different room, bringing temporary relief to Meg, who expresses joy at the prospect of having her own space. Emily questions Meg's resistance to sharing, prompting

her to carefully arrange the move and inform Meg of the new arrangement. Emily remains determined to bring happiness to both her daughters despite the challenges they face.

Sally, driven by her eagerness to assist her sister Meg, relies on her own experience of receiving help and empathises with the emotions Meg must be experiencing. Sally explains the situation in detail to her childhood friend Elsje, “She produced the report card and let Elsje study the marks and Miss Armstrong’s comments” (*SBIM* 160). Elsje’s amazement at Meg’s remarkable abilities and academic aptitude further fuels Sally’s determination.

While witnessing this scene unfold, Elsje not only grasps Meg’s emotions but also reflects on her own experiences of despair. She recalls her brother Piet, who faced challenges due to a disability, particularly when he had to adjust to living in Canada while coping with loneliness and illness during the initial months. Elsje recognises that Meg, despite her slower learning pace, is not without hope, as she has encountered a similar kind of “despair like this before” (*SBIM* 160). Throughout this process, Sally’s deep desire to support Meg becomes evident as she draws upon her own experiences of receiving help and acknowledges the emotional turmoil her sister must be going through.

Sally’s firsthand experiences of inclusion have taught her valuable lessons, particularly in her ability to assist Piet in overcoming the challenges he faces while adjusting to a new environment. Initially grappling with the difficulties of adapting to an inclusive setting as someone with a disability, Sally gradually gains a comprehensive understanding and adapts to her surroundings. A publication titled “10 Reasons to Support Inclusive School Communities for ALL Students” emphasises the vital importance of inclusive schools for individuals with disabilities, proclaiming, “Inclusive School Communities are educational settings in which students with disabilities have opportunities to participate and receive support in all aspects of school life alongside peers who do not have disabilities.” In light of this, Sally recognises her own situation and begins to live in accordance with these principles.

Piet, a former classmate of Sally's from their shared experiences in a traditional school, faces significant challenges as he relocates from Holland to Canada. Sally, drawing upon her own experiences and courageous spirit, provides support to help Piet navigate his anxieties about the new environment, school, and language. The text affirms, "It was Sally's bravery that resolved the situation" (*SBIM* 161). Today, with Sally's assistance, Piet is described as a content and joyful individual who has fully embraced his new home and surroundings. The text asserts, "Nowadays, Piet is a cheerful and amiable person, at peace with himself and his environment" (*SBIM* 161). This highlights the crucial role that support and understanding play in aiding individuals as they navigate the challenges of adjusting to unfamiliar settings.

The novel highlights the significance of peer learning, where individuals support and assist one another in their educational journey. Elsje recognises this as an opportunity to reciprocate Sally's kindness and begins to examine Meg's learning difficulties. She believes that listening is more effective than lecturing and acknowledges the limitations of her own teaching methods. Elsje offers to help Meg, but only if Meg demonstrates a willingness to put in the effort. As stated, "If Meg did not care enough to work hard, Elsje said quietly, she and Sal had other things they could be doing instead" (*SBIM* 162). Elsje's teaching approach aligns with the 'Scaffolding' method, which is tailored for slow and cognitive learners, focusing on each student's growth at their own pace. Drawing from Janice Wearmouth's book *Special Educational Needs and Disability: The Basics*, theorist Rogoff, in 1990, describes the 'Scaffolding' method as:

Firstly, engage the learners' interest in the task, and then demonstrate how to do it. Next, if possible, reduce the number of steps needed for the task so learners can recognise their own progress. Then, control frustration and offer

feedback so that learners can see their own progress. Finally, find a way to motivate the learners so they continue with the task. (28)

The novel passionately underscores the paramount importance of education in fostering a strong bond between Sally and Meg. Despite Meg's initial reservations about sharing a room with Sally, Sally remains resolute in her commitment to help Meg with her studies, alongside the assistance of Elsje. Elsje discerns a glimmer of hope in Meg as they establish a study schedule and location, leading to a notable improvement in Meg's demeanour. The text states, "Elsje had no idea what would come of it, but as they set the time and decided where to work, she saw hope begin to invade Meg's heart again. Her chin came up. She even grinned. It was not the cheeky grin of the old Meg, but both Sal and Elsje were pleased to see it" (*SBIM* 163). Sally's unwavering determination to enhance Meg's life is truly commendable and noteworthy, as she plays a pivotal role in Meg's academic progress. While the Copeland parents also express support for Meg's studies, Sally's remarkable efforts stand out distinctly.

Sally's father initially harbours concerns about the effectiveness of Sally and Elsje teaching Meg, yet he eventually agrees to give it a try and lends his support. He states, "If you and Elsje are willing to take it on, I think we should let you try. We'll explain your ideas to Miss Armstrong" (*SBIM* 164). Sally's decision to teach Meg is motivated by Meg's disappointing test results and her dwindling self-esteem. With Elsje's collaboration, they seek to find a solution. The importance of safeguarding slow learners from feelings of failure is emphasised by theorist Rogoff in *Special Educational Needs and Disability: The Basics*, who highlights the 'Scaffolding method' as an effective approach. Rogoff asserts, "The sense of failure can be very upsetting and/or disturbing, especially when it is a frequent occurrence" (29).

Sally's own education serves as the bedrock for her decision to teach Meg. She recognises the crucial role of education in earning recognition and respect from others and yearns for Meg to experience the same. Despite Meg's challenges as an individual with a disability, Sally is determined to provide her unwavering support in surmounting those obstacles. Alongside Elsje, Sally eagerly awaits Miss Armstrong's evaluation of Meg's test results, a sentiment shared by her father. All parties involved hold high hopes for Meg's hard work and unwavering dedication. Miss Armstrong remarks, "Meg's spelling still came back with fourteen out of twenty wrong, but this time she had tried all twenty words. And her arithmetic was not only finished—it was perfect" (*SBIM* 170). Despite this progress, Meg remains anxious about the results as everyone anticipates the progress card and comments from Miss Armstrong.

According to Miss Armstrong, Meg possesses the potential to exceed her current academic performance and attain higher standards. However, it necessitates her continued diligence. Miss Armstrong also commends Sally and Elsje for their invaluable assistance, expressing congratulations on their support. If Meg maintains the same level of effort, there will be no need for her to be retained in the same grade. This statement underscores the importance of persistent hard work and dedication for academic achievement and personal growth.

Little exemplifies Sally's integration not only within her immediate family but also within her extended family, notably her grandmother. This is evident in the comprehensive portrayal of an entire episode centered around their interactions. The arrival of the grandmother initiates significant transformations within the Copeland family dynamics. Notably, she actively engages in Sally's mother's tasks and even contributes to the education of the Copeland children. A notable departure from Sally's mother's reading style, the grandmother's deliberate and unhurried approach to each word brings about unforeseen

discussions and insights. Sally finds great pleasure in listening to her grandmother's storytelling, but she also discerns the contrasting manner in which her mother used to read the same stories when she was Meg's age. Sally reminisces about the past, recalling how her mother would read aloud to the older children but would stop at the end of each chapter, while the grandmother reads through till the end.

Following Polly's wedding ceremony, the Copeland family travels home by car. In a display of sibling dynamics, Melinda expresses her desire to sit in the front seat, resulting in Meg being held on their mother's lap. Suddenly, Meg experiences distress and bursts into tears. To comfort her, Sally's mother spontaneously sings a lullaby and attempts to lull Meg to sleep. Sally and Melinda quickly join in, harmonising during the second verse. This particular scene accentuates Sally's maturity and empathetic nature as she transitions into adulthood.

Sally's affectionate gesture of kissing her grandmother vividly illustrates the profound bond they share. Meg, observing this loving connection, becomes impressed by Sally's close relationship with their grandmother. The grandmother treats all the Copeland children with equal adoration, fostering an environment where Sally feels at ease and accepted. The unyielding support of family, education, friendships, and social acceptance are all vital components for a child with disabilities to triumph over adversity.

Moreover, Sally's bond with her dog plays a crucial role in her integration. Through the guidance of Elsje Jansen, Sally acquires the skill of training Susie. Despite occasional frustrations, particularly when Meg misspells words, such as "there" or "too," Sally exemplifies unwavering patience, drawing inspiration from Elsje, who has extensive experience working with dogs and assisting Piet in spite of their own challenges (*SBIM* 173). The mentorship and support Sally receives from her teacher, Mr. Mackenzie, as well as her loyal friends, Libby and Elsje, prove to be invaluable. They consistently stand by her side, providing unwavering encouragement to overcome obstacles.

In addition to the complexities within the Copeland family, Jean Little's novel serves as a powerful representation of the broader struggles that Sally encounters in her life, including her strained relationships with her siblings. Through the narrative, Little seeks to shed light on the various emotional and psychological challenges that individuals with disabilities may face.

Sally's falling out with her siblings becomes a poignant reflection of the hurdles she must overcome as a person with cerebral palsy. It portrays the emotional toll that these conflicts take on her, as well as the impact they have on her sense of belonging and self-worth. By exploring this aspect of Sally's life, Little aims to highlight the often overlooked experiences and internal battles that individuals with disabilities navigate daily.

The novel delves into the intricate web of relationships and emotions, presenting a realistic portrayal of the complexities faced by individuals like Sally. It serves as a reminder that the struggles of those with disabilities extend far beyond physical limitations. Little's intention is to provide a platform for empathy and understanding, urging readers to recognise the multifaceted nature of disability and the potential psychological challenges that individuals may encounter.

Through Sally's journey, Little invites readers to consider the broader implications of disability, emphasising the importance of creating inclusive environments that address not only physical barriers but also emotional and psychological well-being. The novel serves as a call to action, urging society to foster empathy, support, and understanding for individuals with disabilities, as they navigate the unique challenges they face in their daily lives.

The parental influence on children with disabilities is a prominent theme in the novels *Mine for Keeps* and *Spring Begins in March*. These parents place a significant emphasis on their children's education, recognising its value in their overall development. The IDEA Series, a comprehensive resource on the segregation of students with disabilities, emphasises

that children and youth with disabilities, alongside their parents, have long fought for “equal access” to education (13). Thus, Sally's parents exemplify unwavering support in ensuring her success in all aspects of life. Jean Little skilfully highlights the critical role played by familial and societal support in the lives of individuals with disabilities.

Inclusion stands as a vital aspect in enabling individuals with disabilities to lead fulfilling and active lives within society. This significance is acknowledged by the United Nations, evident in the title "Social Inclusion" bestowed upon this cause. The United Nations recognizes the ultimate goal of social integration as the creation of a more stable, safe, and equitable society wherein every individual has a meaningful role to play. This objective is founded on the principles that each person possesses rights and responsibilities and should be granted the opportunity to fulfil these responsibilities.

Jean Little, through her novels, emphasises the crucial role of early education for children with disabilities and sheds light on the significance of social inclusion for these individuals. The disability movement echoes the mantra of "nothing about us without us," as quoted by *UN News*. The chapter in question vividly portrays Sally's challenges as a child with a disability and her arduous journey to overcome them. Little's works aim to bring attention to the physical barriers faced by children with disabilities and underscore the importance of their education and social inclusion in fostering a more inclusive society.

Jean Little's portrayal of Sally's character is straightforward yet thought-provoking. Similarly, to Little's own upbringing, Sally's parents place a strong emphasis on education. Unlike Little, Sally longs to have a special friend while attending the Special Care School. Her journey to make friends and find a place within her family is a central theme in Little's novels, rather than her disability. This highlights the universal human need for connection and belonging, which is not limited to individuals without disabilities. Through Sally's

experiences, Little sheds light on the importance of social inclusion and forming meaningful relationships, regardless of any physical or mental barriers that may exist.

The examination of Sally's experiences in Jean Little's novels compellingly underscores the significance of special education, social inclusion, and inclusive education for individuals with disabilities. Through Sally's personal journey, the novels vividly illustrate the challenges and adversities encountered by people with disabilities in their day-to-day lives. They strongly emphasize the imperative of providing equal educational opportunities to all children, irrespective of their abilities. Furthermore, the novels explore the concept of integration into mainstream schools and the progression towards a more inclusive approach. By offering special education within inclusive schools, children with disabilities can receive the necessary support and assistance on their path towards social inclusion and the establishment of a more inclusive society.

Moreover, the novels also illuminate the vital role played by family and friends in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Sally's parents exhibit unwavering support and understanding of her condition, ensuring she has access to the resources required to surmount the obstacles she encounters. This includes providing her with specialised education and training, as well as assisting her in developing the skills necessary for leading an independent life. Additionally, Sally's pursuit of friendships and her desire to carve out her place within her family underscore the significance of social inclusion in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Lennard J. Davis, in *The Disability Studies Reader 5th edition*, further accentuates the theme of social inclusion by highlighting the dichotomy between individual impairments and the social construction of disability, stating that "The social model requires understanding some key dichotomies, the first of which is that an individual impairment differs from the social construction of disability that might surround that impairment" (195). The support and affection of family and friends assume a pivotal role in assisting individuals with disabilities in overcoming societal barriers and leading fulfilling lives.

Furthermore, Claudia Castillo Rodriguez and Nuria Garro-Gil's article titled "Inclusion and Integration in Special Education" draws attention to the "World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality" organized by UNESCO in 1994. The conference explored the interconnected contexts of inclusion, special education, and inclusive schools, highlighting that "the term 'inclusion' appeared for the first time in the context of special education. The use of this term meant a step beyond the concept of 'integration,' which was used until then to designate the action towards integrating children and young people with special needs in mainstream education and community."

In conclusion, Jean Little's novels, centered around the character of Sally, make a substantial scholarly and literary contribution by providing profound insights into the experiences of children with disabilities from a social model perspective. These works serve as a poignant call to action, emphasising the urgent need to create a society that embraces inclusivity and recognises the societal barriers that limit the full participation of individuals with disabilities.

Sally's story within these novels exemplifies the social model perspective, which shifts the focus from viewing disabilities as inherent deficiencies to understanding them as the result of societal structures and attitudes. Little skilfully portrays the external barriers and prejudices that Sally encounters, highlighting the impact of social exclusion on her life. Through Sally's journey, the novels prompt readers to critically examine and challenge these societal barriers, fostering a sense of urgency to create a more inclusive society.

Furthermore, the novels underscore the importance of social inclusion as a fundamental human right through Sally's quest for equal access to education, opportunities, and social acceptance. By drawing on the advocacy efforts of organisations such as the National Council on Disability and the United Nations, these works highlight the ongoing struggle to dismantle discriminatory systems and promote inclusive practices. Sally's

character serves as a catalyst for change, inspiring readers to challenge ableism and advocate for a more equitable and inclusive society.

Moreover, Sally's character defies prevailing stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding individuals with disabilities. Little presents Sally as a resilient, determined, and multifaceted character, highlighting her unique talents, aspirations, and capabilities. This portrayal challenges societal norms and promotes a broader understanding and appreciation of the diverse perspectives and contributions that individuals with disabilities, like Sally, bring to society.

In summary, Jean Little's novels, through the narrative lens of Sally, make a significant scholarly and literary contribution by providing profound insights into the experiences of children with disabilities from a social model perspective. These works call attention to the barriers and prejudices that hinder social inclusion, urging readers to critically examine and dismantle these systemic obstacles. By emphasising the importance of social inclusion as a human right and challenging prevailing stereotypes, these novels inspire readers to actively participate in creating a more inclusive society that values and respects the experiences and perspectives of all individuals, regardless of their abilities.