

**Oh, Wie Schön ist Toleranz:
Lessons of Diversity, Inclusion, and Acceptance
in Janosch's Tiger and Bear Picture Book Stories**

At a time when much of the world seems more divided than ever, from world states to individuals of different races, religions, and sexual orientation, the lessons of tolerance from German author Janosch's picture book stories featuring his iconic characters, Bear and Tiger, provide a respite from reality and a reminder that living in harmonious tolerance is achievable. In this paper I argue that Janosch demonstrates for young readers the essence of tolerance in works that literally and figuratively illustrate—yet never explicitly address—that Tiger and Bear are a same-sex couple of different species. What is explicitly demonstrated is that Tiger and Bear are best friends and loving companions who are respectful and kind to each other. In this paper, I examine the lessons of tolerance found in Janosch's works using Margaret Meek's discussion of how readers learn from texts and how texts teach readers lessons that are hidden within visual rhetoric.

While focusing on Janosch's *Oh, Wie Schön ist Panama* (1978, trans. *Oh, How Fine is Panama*), in which Tiger and Bear set out on an adventure to make a new life in Panama, I also reference the continuing aspect of the characters' domestic relationship in the subsequent texts *Der Kleine Tiger Braucht ein Fahrrad* (1992, trans. *The Little Tiger Needs a Bicycle*) and *Post für den Tiger* (1993, trans. *Mail for the Tiger*). Using Sartre's notion of "private lessons" that readers give themselves when they engage with a literary work, I demonstrate that engaging with Janosch's Tiger and Bear books creates for readers tolerance and acceptance of those who may be different from themselves. In addition to Meeks and Sartre, I also utilize the visual and rhetorical theories of Maria Nikolajeva, Steven Wolk, and others.

In the current political climate, when every day seemingly brings fresh challenges in the struggle for tolerance, returning to the tranquil lessons of social equality and acceptance is a respite from reality and a way forward to greater recognition, appreciation, inclusion, and celebration of our differences.