

PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH TO THE CHARACTERS IN ROALD DAHL'S *MATILDA*

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ABSTRACT

Roald Dahl is a British author who penned nineteen children's books over his decades – long writing career. In 1953 he published the best selling story collection *Some One Like You*. He published the popular book *James and the Giant Peach* in 1961. In 1964, he released *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. In 1988 he published *Matilda*, the highly successful work. All these works were later adopted into movies. Psychoanalysis is a set of theories and therapeutic techniques related to the study of the unconscious mind, which together form a method of treatment for mental health disorder. It was established in the early 1890's by Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalytic concepts are also widely used outside the therapeutic arena, in areas such as psychoanalytic literary criticism as well as in the analysis of films, fairy tales and other cultural phenomena. Roald Dahl's *Matilda* is about the adventures of genius five years old girl who uses her powers to help her beloved teacher and friends to come out of their cruel treatment of Miss. Trunchbull. The psychoanalysis of the characters in *Matilda* is about how the character's of different ages are influenced by their past childhood experiences and how these experiences are consciously and unconsciously processed within their developmental stages and how these experiences shaped their personality.

PSYCHOANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERS IN *MATILDA*

Children's author Roald Dahl wrote the kids classics *Matilda*, *The BFG* and *The Witches*. Roald Dahl was born in Llandaff, South Wales, on September 13, 1916. Dahl's parents were Norwegians. As a child he spent his summer vacation visiting his grand parents house in Oslo. When Dahl was four years old, his father died. Dahl studied at Repton, a private school. After his schooling he went to places like Africa and Kenya for his work. In 1939. Dahl worked as a

pilot for Royal Air Force. He became a fighter pilot for World War II. The plane met with a crash and Dahl was left with severe injuries to his skull, spine and hip. After his recovery he worked as an assistant air attache. He died on November 23rd at the age of 74, after suffering an unspecified infection.

Psychoanalysis is a theory that was found by Sigmund Freud, psychologist and neurologist in the 19th century, who came from Austria. According to Freud the three major components of personality are Id, Ego and Super Ego. Id operates based on the pleasure principle which demands immediate gratification of needs. Super Ego plays the critical and moralizing role and Ego is the realistic part that mediates between the desire of the Id and the Super Ego.

The interaction of these three components of mind decides the personality of the human behaviour. As a psychologist, in dealing with his patients Sigmund Freud always give questions and analyse every problem that they face, so he then get a lot of insight into the personal experiences in childhood that they experienced have an impact in influencing the personality when they grew +up.

Based on the statement it can be concluded that the events of the past or a person's life experience can affect their psychological condition and consequently impacts on the activities that will be performed by the patient in the future. The paper is based on the application of the theory of psychoanalysis. One of the famous writers of children's books, Roald Dahl in his works provides scope for psycholinguistic analysis.

Matilda is one of Dahl's classic children's stories, published in 1988. It is about a girl who was a rebel genius, ignored by her family. She found solace in the library and a friend in Miss.Honey, her school teacher. The story tells about the condition of vulnerable children against sadistic and powerful adult figures. Due to his own difficult childhood, Dahl's children stories always includes an element of darkness and psychological disturbances.

In *Matilda's* family she was unimportant for her parents Mr and Mrs. Wormwood. They did not care about her. They did not know how smart and intelligent their child is. For an example, in one incident, *Matilda* an infant at the time, covered herself in baby food but was able to spell out her name. But, her parents noticeses that their daughter covered in baby food and ignores the fact that she spelled her name at a very young age. *Matilda* felt that she was neglected by her parents and brother. That puts her in a kind of social-anxiety. But, *Matilda* unlike her family members she did not find happiness in watching TV. She finds happiness in reading books. She finds friendship and connection with the characters of the books. She often

visits the library and reads most of the books. The love for books began at a very young age because her mother leaves her alone at home.

The movie version begins with from the library scene, she is wearing a blue hair bow, blue represents tranquility and peace, when she enters the library her hair bow is now white, which represents hope, purity and goodness. Finally, when she is laughing while reading her hair bow is red, which represents love and passion. When she is wearing her red bow she is happy because her love for books has grown since she first entered the library. The changes in the colour of the ribbon reflects the psychological state of her mind.

When Matilda attends school she meets Miss. Honey, her teacher. Miss. Honey is sweet and kind hearted teacher. Matilda feels at home in Miss.Honey's class. Matilda was attracted by the love and affection of her teacher. Because, she never received any kind of love from her parents. So for her Miss.Honey is like a motherly figure who cares and loves her children in school. Miss.Honey also craved for the same love as Matilda. Because she too lost her parents when she was little. She had an unhappy childhood like Matilda. But she used education and her job as a means of escape from her problems.

Miss. Trunchbull and Miss. Honey have a significant past linked. Miss.Honey is Miss. Trunchbull's niece. Miss. Honey's mother dies when she was two years old. Her father decided to call AgasthaTrunchbull, his wife's half sister to take care of his daughter. But Trunchbull was very cruel to Miss. Honey behind his back. When Honey's father dies Trunchbull took all the properties of Honey and made Honey to move out of her house and live on her own. Miss.Honey's belongings are still in that house. Going back to that house represents rejection. "The temporary return to a former psychological state." (Tyson, 15)

Matilda performs the power of telekinesis to the evil doers around her. She performs it to Miss. Trunchbull, the head mistress of her school. Because Miss.Trunchbull finds ruthless punishments for young students. She imprisons children in 'The Chokey' a small, dark, enclosed space. 'The Chokey' is a symbolic representation of Miss.Trunchbull's inhospitable womb. Because Trunchbull is unmarried and undesired by everyone, she dislikes children to such an extent as to impose cruel and unusual punishments on them for the smallest of crimes. She says, 'She never was a child' suggests that she may have repressed her own childhood or is almost unwilling to recognise the physical validity of the children around her.

Despite this, she chooses to become head mistress of an elementary school, surrounding herself by infants and young boys and girls. By imprisoning children in a Chokey is psychologically revealing that she has a secret desire for children of her own. So, she traps them deep in the

metaphoric womb of her chokey, where they are unable to escape. She was not able to have children of her own. That is the reason for her arrogance towards the children.

Roald Dahl's *Matilda* teaches the importance of standing up for what we consider is right, no matter how young we are. He also teaches the importance of reading through the characters of Matilda and Miss.Honey. Matilda reads about the world and tries to change herself to that character. Oatley, a cognitive psychologist at the university of Toronto, talks about the psychological effects of fiction upon the readers. He says that engaging with stories about other people can improve empathy and theory of mind. position and we can imagine it's like being that person." That enables one to better understand people, better and cooperate with them better.

By developing the habit of reading *Matilda* and *Miss.Honey* understands the people around them. They found reading as an alternative solution for escape from their family. Miss.Trunchbull can be considered as a Freudian Beast. She has suppressed lots of things beyond her conscious mind and that has a strong influence upon her brutal action upon children.

Psychoanalytical reading helps the readers to understand the hidden message that is created through the characters by the author. It reveals the unconscious desires, drives and motives of the characters created by the author.

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