Character Analysis of Matilda Wormwood from Roald Dahl's *Matilda*

Roald Dahl's *Matilda* is one of the most famous children's novels of the 20th century. The protagonist of this tale is Matilda Wormwood, a five and a half-year-old girl with a brilliant and lively mind that distances her from the rest of the family. Matilda's character is particularly interesting as she has a powerful personality with extraordinary mental abilities, and she manages to overcome all the obstacles that surround her.

The main aspect of Matilda's personality is her particular image. From the beginning of the novel, Dahl described Matilda as exceptional person: "the child in question is extraordinary, and by that, I mean sensitive and brilliant" (1). Natov called her a rebellious superhero child with extraordinary mental strengths (140). Moreover, it is interesting that coming for the first time to the library, Matilda starts reading the book *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. This fact makes a reader assume that a great change will happen with the main character.

However, Matilda is growing up surrounded by a not appreciating environment. The girl's parents are not interested in education or literature. Her mom, Mrs Wormwood, spends afternoons playing bingo, and her dad, Mr Wormwood, is a cheater. As grotesquely described by the author, they were too involved in their "silly little lives" to understand how special their daughter is (Dahl 2). Matilda, therefore, is continually told by her parents that she is "a noisy chatterbox" and that "small girls should be seen and not heard" (Dahl 11). The character of Matilda appears even more powerful and strong as she takes the responsibility for changing her life and develops her extraordinary abilities despite the obstacles that she meets in the family (Spivey 95). The opposition between family and Matilda is one of the main ways Dahl creates the protagonist's image in the novel.

Over the course of the narrative, Matilda is showing the ability to change the environment around her, it can be seen clearly when she enters the Primary School and meets

the abusive headmistress, Miss Trunchbul. It is interesting that Matilda, being a little child, saves not only her classmates but also an adult person, her teacher, Miss Honey. In this way, Matilda can be seen as “the impassioned, ten-year-old social warrior” (Maynard 49). By making a change, Matilda creates a new family for herself, therefore, a new environment.

This new environment can be described as an opposition to her original one. Miss Honey, a sweet and patient teacher, recognizes Matilda's talents and strives to enhance them, encouraging the little girl to develop her great potential. The diverse attitude was coming from her parents who were trying to suppress those qualities of Matilda and considered her “ignorant and stupid” (Dahl 6). With Miss Honey, on the other hand, Matilda “felt completely comfortable in her presence, and the two of them talked to each other more or less as equals” (Dahl 80). Matilda no longer has to be seen as inferior to adults, now they are equals.

All in all, the novel of Roald Dahl presents an exceptional personality of the little girl and the dynamics of the protagonist’s development. In the beginning, a reader might see only a lonely smart girl not appreciated by her parents. However, by the end of the book, Matilda appears a powerful, unique individuality that found harmony around her and can happily develop her extraordinary potential further.

Works Cited

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