

# *Character Description Of Children Personages In “Charlie And The Chocolate Factory” By Roald Dahl*

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**Abstract – The article aims to discuss the issue of morality and moral values with the help of characters of children’s book written by Roald Dahl. The main focus is mature and immature morality that helps parents and teachers to be aware of the moral values that young readers are to develop and understand in order to reach the level of being socially well-behaved in the community.**

**Keywords – *moral development, morality, immorality, moral knowledge, and moral values***

Children’s literature as a piece of writing is a distinctive genre compared to the fiction written for adults; precisely it is suitable and meant for children. Literature deals with emotion, feelings, and experience. Children’s literature in this sense assists children in exploring and formulating their own thoughts, learn to comprehend the surroundings and realising their own experiences. Moreover, they learn how to connect what happened in the story with real-life situations. It is considered significantly relevant for children to read literature during their childhood years as it gives a chance for them to dwell on fantasy, deal with trauma and develop self-assurance. Children’s literature is also a strong tool to understand and promote moral values. ‘Stories for children are significant as they have the elements of adventure, entertainment, and education that teach children to behave in society in a proper way’ (Coody, 1999). It is also believed that the novels preferred mainly by children represent their own social and moral development.

Roald Dahl with his wide range of books written for kids emphasized the importance of moral values and moral development within the characters of his novels. Children all over the world have been delighted by Dahl's books that have enchanted their lives. James and the Giant Peach (1961), Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (1964), The BFG (1982), Matilda (1988), and The Witches (1983) are considered the ones of his famous books. Dahl is mostly well-known for his humorous fantasy stories that have always been welcomed and loved by children although a majority of critics describe them as violence and cruelty. West (1988) and Szuber (1999) in his writings empathized that Dahl’s children’s books in most cases met with adults’ disapproval.

For instance, his book so-called Charlie and Chocolate Factory written in the year 1964 met attacks for being racist through the characters of Oompa Loompas despite being adored by children. ‘Although the attack on the depiction of the Oompa Loompas as racist raised a public uproar, Dahl pointed out that Oompa Loompas in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory are —charming creatures, whereas the white kids in the book were, with the exception of Charlie, most unpleasant’ (West, 1988). Because of the criticism, later Dahl revised the book describing and delivering that the Oompa Loompas are pink creatures that come from a remote island, instead of showing them as black pygmies from Africa. In one of the articles written in the Horn Book Magazines, Charlie and Chocolate Factory was seen as one of the tasteless books whose readers were children.

However, literary critics have never explored and analyzed Dahl’s works from the aspect of the comic grotesque and the children’s culture. Most interpretations are very limited and narrow. When his works were interpreted considering the aspects of folk humour and comic grotesque, it would be realized that negativity like violence, cruelty, and sadism is discouraged with humor. His stories are to be interpreted positively while children get enjoyment and see the message within the books as a source

of motivation. Dahl claimed: ‘My only purpose in writing books for children is to encourage them to develop a love of books. I’m not trying to indoctrinate them in any way. I’m trying to entertain them. If I can get a young person into the habit of reading and thinking that books are fun, then, with a bit of luck, that habit will continue through life’ (West 1988).

It is relevant to consider that the novels should be appropriate for the age and especially, for the children’s moral reasoning. The reason is that they are in favour of the books which reflect their social status, moral values and development. Despite the literary criticism of his book *Charlie and Chocolate Factory* (1964), it is believed that it can serve as an inspiration and encouragement for children through the characters of the novel. The majority of the children’s characters Dahl created in his novels assist children to learn what moral development is, how they can experience it, what challenges they might face, and how to deal with them. Therefore, it is quite interesting to select this for the interpretation to see how its characters illustrate immature morality in children considering their performance in certain circumstances and conditions, the way how they judge morally in decision making and how they build and develop relationships with others, and so on.

Maturity and immaturity in terms of children morality are always crucial both for parents and teachers at schools to communicate properly and understand children and their moral values. ‘Immature morality represents immature moral judgment. Children learn that the punishment given makes the action wrong and any physical damage is a harmful act. Children with immature morality also possess egocentric orientation when morality is viewed as an exchange of favors, —I did this so you’d better do that for me, —pay them back if they’ve done it to you, —what’s in it for me?! before you help others (Gibbs, 2003). He also stated that when a person is immature that means s/he is going to have challenges understanding a real mutuality in a relationship. More specifically, if the one is likely to be or act like self-centred, s/he is good at seeing others as unfair instead of detecting the unfairness s/he is doing to others. Furthermore, people with immature morality think that everybody has a right to obtain whatever they want and express directly what they always feel, and unfortunately, they do consider that nobody even the authority should have no control and they are their own bosses. On the contrary, ‘mature morality describes moral judgment as mutual trust and understanding others’(Gibbs, 2005). That is to say, children have a try to impress the others so that they can build and develop a stable relationship. Understanding others, their preferences and perspectives are inextricably connected with maturity. Being honest also builds mutual trust among people. Additionally, mature morality deals with societal expectations and the social values of individuals. The young generation can contribute to society with their cooperation and collaboration, admiration, promises, and responsibilities for others. Morality and problems related to it are inextricably connected and cannot be separated from the youth. Having a social network with adults or friends assist children to understand social values like respect, cooperation, integration, responsibility, and support.

In his book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, negative characters always tend to be egocentric to reach their own fulfillment. Behaving egoistic and non-emphatic illustrates immature morality. The characters, for instance, Augustus is depicted as greedy and ignorant; and Veruca is seen as bossy and spoilt. In the case of the characteristics of children that is disobedience. It is not clearly depicted in the novel by Dahl that characters like Augustus and Veruca learn the lesson from the punishment which are given to them. Despite that, young readers tend to understand how to behave properly if they are aware of good moral virtues which triumph the victory at the end whilst bad manners and evil actions deserve a punishment. Moreover, children learn to understand and connect the adverse results of bad deeds with the happenings of the real world. Being disobedient, greedy, and hostile towards parents and other people in society are seen as the characteristics of children immaturity and misbehaving in these ways always lead them to get punished.

Charlie, on the contrary, is depicted as an obedient boy and a perfect grandchild of the Bucket family. Obeying the rules set in the chocolate factory, listening the stories by his grandparents every night, establishing a warm and good relationship with people surrounding him, respecting the elderly, and of course, Charlie’s social bond and positive interaction within the family and his kindness and responsibility signify the mature morality. He always shares what he has with his family members. Although Charlie’s family is poor, the harmonious atmosphere in his family makes him grow up as a mature person understanding the moral values. It is relevant to state that Charlie is not doing these good deeds on the basis of exchanging something good for him, but rather on the basis of love and favour towards his family. Gibbs (2003) says, ‘This fits the characteristic of mature morality when any action done is based on love and respect for the others, and this shows the portrayal of his mature morality that understanding others is important in building a positive relationship’.

Another situation with Charlie that illustrated mature morality is that when he is rewarded with the chocolate factory, he feels in doubt and insecure whether his family would agree to live there. More precisely, he tries to calm his grandparents who feel also doubtful and frightened, and persuades them that this is a wonderful, and safe place in the world.

According to Hissan (2012), ‘Dahl’s Charlie and the Chocolate Factory would benefit readers from the non-western community since the value identified such as respect, honesty, and obedience is quite similar to the universal values taught to school children in Asian countries. Thus, it is recommended that policymakers and teachers in school incorporate children’s literature in primary schools to equip school children with a better understanding of morality and moral values.

In conclusion, the message the author of the book wants to deliver is relevant for both children and their parents. The main moral for young readers is that good children are rewarded for their positivity and good actions whereas not well-behaved children are not. The youth see that as a theme because it is what is taught most to them by their parents. While examining the story one can conclude that good and bad things happen to anyone. What is important is how the person behaves in this circumstance and how s/he accepts and what s/he gets out of it. Significantly, that shows whether one is mature or immature, and one can understand moral values rightly and integrate with others in a reasonable, socially accepted manner.

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