
A Study of Ideal Parenting in Novels of Dahl's Matilda and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

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Abstract

Parenting is a substantial theme in Roald Dahl's novels, often portrayed with embellished and conflicting styles. Dahl uses parenting to highlight the impact of adult behavior on children, sometimes in comedic or darkly satirical ways. Dahl frequently portrays hostile parenting, highlighting neglect, abuse, and selfishness. His styles also highlight the flaws and virtues of how children are raised. Dahl focuses on how different parenting styles shape children's personalities and fates, making a solid case for the importance of balanced, caring, and attentive parenting. In Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Charlie's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bucket, and his grandparents, especially Grandpa Joe, represent love, care, and sacrifice despite their extreme poverty. Despite being poor, he instills humility, patience, gratitude, and strong moral values in him. They demonstrate that wealth is not a measure of good parenting, but love and support matter most. The novel represents two extreme forms of parenting: neglectful and abusive parents like the Wormwoods and nurturing, supportive figures like Miss Honey. Matilda's parents do not value education or intelligence and actively discourage her from reading or pursuing intellectual growth.

Keywords: Parenting, Neglect, abuse, Selfish, Nurturing, Support, etc.

Parenting refers to raising and nurturing a child from infancy through adulthood. It involves providing for the child's basic needs, such as food, shelter, and safety while supporting their emotional, social, and intellectual development. Parenting also includes teaching values, discipline, and life skills and fostering a supportive and loving environment to help the child grow into a well-adjusted and responsible adult.

Ideal Parenting: Ideal parenting refers to a balanced and thoughtful approach to raising children, where parents provide a nurturing, supportive, and structured environment that fosters healthy development. Love, emotional support, guidance, discipline, role modeling, and adaptability will help you navigate life with resilience and compassion.

Bad Parenting: Bad parenting can negatively affect a child's mental health, self-esteem, behavior, and overall well-being, potentially leading to long-term emotional and social difficulties. It can involve neglect, inconsistency, lack of emotional support, or harmful discipline methods.

Parenting is a significant theme in Roald Dahl's novels, often portrayed in exaggerated and contrasting styles. He uses parenting to highlight the impact of adult behavior on children, sometimes in comedic or menacingly satirical ways. Dahl emphasizes that parents have a profound influence on children's development. His novels consist of neglectful and abusive parents, overindulgent or enabling parents, supportive and loving figures, absent or dead parents, and the impact of grandparents. Dahl's interpretation of parenting serves not just as a critique of different parenting styles but also as a way to highlight the flexibility and agency of children, often conflicting harsh adult behavior with the native goodness or cleverness of his young protagonists.

MATILDA

Matilda

It is a funny thing about parents. Even when their child is the most disgusting little blister you could ever imagine, they still think that they are lovely. Some parents go further. They become so blinded by adorations that they convince themselves their child has genius qualities. (Pg. no.1) Occasionally, one comes across parents who take the opposite line, who show no interest at all in their children, and these, of course, are far worse than the doting ones; Mr and Mrs Wormwood were two such parents. They had a son called MICHAEL and a daughter, MATILDA, and the parents looked upon Matilda in particular as nothing more than a scab. You have to put up with a scab until the time comes when you can pick it off and flick it away. Mr and Mrs Wormwood looked forward to when they could pick their little daughter off and flick her away, preferably into the following country or even further. (Pg. no.4-5)

Matilda's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wormwood, are neglectful, dismissive, and emotionally abusive. They are indifferent to Matilda's exceptional intelligence and talents. They treat her as a nuisance and constantly belittle her. Mr. Wormwood, a dishonest car salesman, prides himself on his crooked ways, and Mrs. Wormwood is more interested in watching TV and participating in bingo than spending time with her daughter.

Mrs. Wormwood's neglect extends to not providing emotional support but

also mocking her love for reading, claiming that watching television is far better than books. This leads to her becoming highly independent and finding her own way to cope.

Miss Honey

Miss Jennifer Honey was a MILD and QUIET person who never raised her voice and was seldom seen to smile, but there is no doubt she possessed that rare gift of being adored by every small child under her care. (Pg. no 90)

Miss. Honey, who is Matilda's teacher, stands in sharp contrast to the Wormwoods. She is very kind enough with her and recognizes and appreciates Matilda's intelligence. Miss. Honey's nurturing and supportive behavior provides a safe and welcoming environment, allowing Matilda to thrive both passionately and logically. In many ways Miss. Honey becomes a surrogate mother to Matilda offering support and protection.

Miss Trunchbull

*Miss Trunchbull, the Headmistress, was something else altogether. She was a gigantic holy terror, a **FIERCE TYRANNICAL MONSTER** who frightened the life out of the pupils and teachers alike. There was an aura of menace about her even at a distance, and when she came up close, you could almost feel the dangerous heat radiating from her as if it were a red-hotrod of metal. (Pg.no 91)*

Miss.Trunchbull, an abusive authority figure who negatively influences the Headmistress of the school, represents an extreme form of authoritarian control and abuse. Trunchbull's treatment of the children under her care, and especially her treatment of Miss Honey, whom she raised after the death of her parents, further highlights the destructive nature of abusive and controlling figures in children's lives. Her severity provides a stark contrast to Miss Honey's gentle nature, emphasizing how drastically different adult figures can influence children. Though she is not a parent, her role as a figure of authority over children contrasts with Miss Honey's kindness. She rules the school with cruelty, using fear, intimidation, and physical punishment. In some ways, she reflects the worst aspects of the Wormwood but on a larger, more tyrannical scale.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Roald Dahl represents a range of parenting styles that highlight both the flaws and virtues of how children are raised. The novel uses the stark contrast between the parents of the four spoiled children and Charlie's family to emphasize moral lessons about parenting, behavior, and values.

Charlie Bucket

Mr. and Mrs. Bucket have a small boy named Charlie Bucket. The whole of this family—the six grown-ups and little Charlie Bucket --- live together in a small wooden house on the edge of a great town. (Pg no.4). There wasn't even enough money to buy proper food for them all. The only meals they could afford were bread

*and margarine for breakfast, boiled potatoes and cabbage for lunch, and cabbage soup for supper. (Pg. no.6). The Buckets, of course, didn't starve, but every one of them --- the two old grandfathers, the two old grandmothers, Charlie's father, Charlie's mother, and especially little Charlie himself--- went about from morning till night with a **HORRIBLE EMPTY FEELING** in their tummies. (Pg. no.7)*

Charlie's parents and grandparents, especially Grandpa Joe, represent love, care, and sacrifice despite their extreme poverty. His family is poor, but he instills humility, patience, gratitude, and strong moral values. They prove that wealth is not that important in front of good parenting and love and support are more measurable. Grandpa Joe plays a significant role as a parental figure. He shares stories encourages Charlie to believe in himself.

Augustus Gloop

Augustus Gloop, a nine-year-old boy who was so enormous, looked as though he had been blown up by a powerful pump. (Pg. no.43). 'I just knew Augustus would find a Golden Ticket,' his mother had told the journalists. 'He eats so many bars of chocolate a day that it is almost impossible for him not to find one. Eating is his hobby, you know. That's all he's interested in. (Pg. no.45)

Augustus's mother encourages his gluttony, even defending it, claiming that eating is just a healthy sign of a growing boy. She never sets limits on his eating habits. His greed leads him to fall into the Chocolate River and get stuck in a pipe. His mother's inability to guide him toward moderation reflects her permissive, enabling parenting.

Veruca Salt

*Veruca's father, Mr. Salt, had eagerly explained to the journalists exactly how the ticket was found. 'You see,' he had said, 'as soon as my little girl told me that she simply had to have one of those Golden Tickets, I went out into the town and started buying up all the Wonka bars I could lay my hands on. Thousands of them, I must have bought. **Hundreds of Thousands!** (Pg.no48-49)*

Veruca's father and mother over indulge her every whim, giving her everything she demands without question. This has made her spoiled selfish, and demanding. Veruca's downfall in the factory means being thrown into garbage chute by the squirrels symbolizes the consequences of unchecked indulgence.

Miss Violet Beauregarde

*"I'm a gum chewer, normally," she shouted," but when I heard about these ticket things of Mr Wonka's, I gave up gum and started on chocolate bars in the hope of striking lucky. Now, of course, I'm back on gum. **I JUST ADORE GUM.** I can't do without it. I munch it all day long except for a few minutes at mealtimes when I take it out and stick it behind my ear for safekeeping. To tell you the truth, I simply wouldn't feel comfortable if I didn't have that little wedge of gum to chew on every moment of the day; I really wouldn't. My mother says it's undignified, and it looks*

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ugly to see my jaws going up and down all the time, but I don't agree. And who's she to criticize, anyway, because if you ask me, I'd say that her jaws are going up and down almost as much as mine are just from yelling at me every minute of the day." (Pg.no 62-63)

Violet parents are overtly competitive and encourage her daughter's obsession with winning and breaking record, even when it is unnecessary or harmful. Violet's arrogance leads her to choose an experimental piece of gum that turns her into a Blueberry. Her mother is more concerned with her daughter's appearance than well-being, indicating a superficial and misguided approach to parenting.

Mike Teavee

"The nine-year-old was seated before an enormous television set, with his eyes glued to the screen, and he was watching a film in which one bunch of gangsters was shooting up another bunch of gangsters.

' "QUITE!" he shouted when someone tried to ask him a question. "Didn't I tell you not to interrupt? This show's an absolute whizz-banger! It's terrific! I watch it every day. I watch all of them every day, even the rotten ones, where there's no shooting. I like gangsters best. They're terrific, those gangsters! Especially when they start firing off their guns or giving each other the one-two-three with their knuckledusters! Gosh, what wouldn't I give to be doing that myself! It's the life, I tell you! It's terrific!" (Pg.no 66-68)

Mike's parents particularly his father is passive and allow him to spend all his time watching television and engaging in violent fantasies. They do not limit his screen time or correct his poor behavior. Mike's obsession with television results in him shrinking to a tiny size after entering the television broadcast room. His parent's failure to guide him forward toward healthier interests shows the danger of neglecting a child's development.

Dahl uses these exaggerated parental figures to critique different types of bad parenting, from overindulgence to permissiveness to competitiveness. The consequences that befall the children in the factory mirror the flaws in their upbringing. While each of these children is punished for their poor behavior, the deeper message is that their behavior is largely a reflection of their parent's influence. On the other hand, Charlie's humble, well-behaved nature, nurtured by loving parents and grandparents, is ultimately rewarded. His success shows that good parenting, characterized by love, support, and moral guidance, leads to positive outcomes. In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Dahl highlights how different parenting styles directly shape children's personalities and fates, making a strong case for the importance of balanced, caring, and attentive parenting.

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