

Holly Dahl

7.1 Charlie, Cameron, and Dahl

### **CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY AS CHILDREN LITERATURE**

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory has been a favorite among children's books, not to mention the movies. However, I am going to simply discuss my feelings solely about the written book version by Roald Dahl. It seems that there are always mixed reviews on children's novels and it seems as though no author can escape the speculation of reviewers and the analytical points of view from others. However, as I read the book, I fell in love with the hopeful character of Charlie, and the witty personality of Mr. Wonka. I read the book as a leisure read, just how most children, teachers, or families would read it. I found the book to be a wonderful imaginative fantasy that children can fall in love with. The novel is unlike any other story, and the originality is what I think will make the story last throughout several generations. Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is a children's novel that has a theme of how the good person doesn't finish last and the importance of keeping a positive attitude no matter what your situation is. The theme and characters make the book relatable and loved by the readers.

Not everyone shares the same opinion about Roald Dahl's classic of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, in which they read into underlying themes and tones in the story. For example, Cameron's article criticized Dahl's book as having aggressive undertones and fake humor and poverty within the text. I would have to agree with the aggressiveness and harshness to the treatment of the children in the book, but I believe Dahl used his creative humor to cover it. The incidents with the poorly behaved children were funny and there was no violent harm done to them. This underlying aggression is a common theme in several of Dahl's classics like Matilda and James and the Giant Peach. Also, the poverty in the story is meant to express to the readers the difficult situation people with little money are placed in, even if Dahl does it in an extreme manner. The novel is fiction and supposed to be made up and creative. Sometimes people look too deep into children's books to find themes that are inappropriate for children, whether they were intentional or not by the author.

Cameron also criticizes Dahl for his use and treatment of the Oompa Loompas and the grandparents in the novel. Cameron writes how the Oompa Loompas were taken from their land and put to work in the chocolate factory without other options of other places to go. Also, Charlie's grandparents were taken reluctantly to the chocolate factory to spend the rest of their life. I agree with Cameron that the treatment of the grandparents was unfair, but Charlie would have been disappointed and sad if his grandparents did not agree to come with them. Also, I agree with Cameron about the unfair treatment of the Oompa Loompas, in which they were not given a choice. However, Dahl portrays the Oompa Loompas to be happy in the factory, and we are not given their side of the story of whether or not they would rather be somewhere else. The reader can only base their judgment on what is given in the story, which is Wonka's version that he saved the people from horrific beasts in their land. Readers can decide for themselves if they want to analyze the depictions in the story or take them at face value from the author.

Dahl defends himself from the accusations from Cameron by stating that he wrote the book for children. He explains that he has children of his own and would not intentionally write a bad story that was inappropriate for children. Also, Dahl says that he dedicated Charlie and the Chocolate Factory to

his son and would not dedicate an awful story to his own son. Dahl writes that Cameron is out of touch with reality by thinking that Little Women and Robinson Crusoe are classic books that should be read to children. I agree with him that those books would bore students and is not anything that they can relate to. Children can relate to a boy who is down on his luck, who has a love for candy and chocolate, and becomes an heir to a chocolate factory. What child would not want to invent various types of candies and earn a living making chocolate and candy? Dahl's defense is strong against Cameron by stating that she is out of touch with reality and how he has children of his own that he writes and tells stories for.

Overall, I find Dahl's book to be a classic children's novel that does have some subtle undertones, but is creative and imaginative, easy for children to read and follow, and can create thought provoking questions for students. There are undertones to race, gender, weight, and age within the story, but I feel that is something that adults would notice and not children. Dahl did write the book for children and adults to enjoy. Many books have similar undertones whether they were written a century ago or within the past year! What I like about the story is the ease of the reading and the simplicity of flow, which makes the book enjoyable for children of various reading and comprehension levels. This is the goal for many children's books to be open to all students no matter their reading level and make it fun and adventurous for them. Also, there are great areas of discussion throughout the book that can be used in the classrooms, despite what Cameron thinks. Teachers can discuss what and why various things happen to the other children; Charlie's family's situation and how they feel about it; along with the themes of greed, laziness, gluttony, and spoiled attitudes. I find Dahl's book to be a fun novel for students that allow them to think in-depth about some themes and situations within the novel. It is a children's book, and I find it frustrating when others attempt to find faults or inappropriate and suggestive themes with the author's intent. We have to think what the ultimate goal of the children's book is and whether or not the book fulfilled that goal. In my opinion, I believe Roald Dahl created an imaginative story with characters and themes children can relate to.