

## **A JOURNEY FROM INNOCENCE TO EXPERIENCE: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES IN ROALD DAHL'S FICTION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Innocence refers to a state of purity, simplicity often associated with lack of knowledge and experience is the accumulation of knowledge gained through challenges. In this paper, I would like to talk about the Children who were transformed from innocence to experience in the select novels of Roald Dahl. Roald Dahl's *The BFG*, *The Magic Finger*, *The Enormous Crocodile*, *The Witches* also explore the theme of innocence to experience, through all his novels though it presents the journey in an exclusive way. Dahl regularly places child protagonists in strange or dangerous situations where they challenge moral and existential questions, developing maturity resilience as they face these challenges. In the novel *The BFG*, Sophie the protagonist, is a young orphan who lives in an innocent cramped world until she's kidnapped by the Big Friendly Giant (BFG). Her journey from innocence to experience begins when she reaches a place known Giant Country, place of danger and magic inhabited by child-eating giants. In *The Witches* of Dahl, the boy unnamed undergoes one of the most intense transitions from innocence to experience. He starts with a naïve, childlike view of the world but soon moves away from the world into a terrifying reality upon learning that witches exist and are planning to harm children. When the boy is changed as a mouse, now he must navigate life in a new form, by being brave and using resourcefulness and intelligence.

**Key Words:** Innocence, Experience, Danger, Challenges, Transition etc.

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### **Magic/Magical Realism and Fantasy:**

Roald Dahl creates the modern day fairy tales in his books. The reader is able to fantasize about the characters in the book and see the world from the view point of the child narrator. His books become

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very powerful, optimistic and believable for children because they are able to live the life of the character and hopefully have a happy ending. Dahl's books always have a struggle between good and evil and he purposefully balances out the good and evil and show that the good always overcomes the bad. Magical realism is often seen as an amalgamation of real and magical elements that produces a more inclusive writing form than either literary realism or fantasy.

### **A Journey from Innocence to Experience**

Innocence is a quality normally linked to a childhood, where one sees the world without mistrust, bias or deep understanding of harm or wrong doing. In literature, innocence regularly characterizes young or inexperienced characters that have not yet faced life's challenges or moral dilemmas, conflicting with knowledgeable perceptions that come with maturity or experience. Experience involves learning from successes, hardships and mistakes, which contours a person's perspective, resilience and wisdom. In literature, experience typically represents the transition from a naïve, innocent outlook to a more complex, realistic understanding of the world, as characters encounter moral intricacies, personal growth or transformation through their journeys. In both the fictions, Dahl presents balanced lighthearted moments with darker and more baleful themes; he often positions children as agents of change. These contrasts keep young readers engaged in introducing them social issues and feel capable of confronting their fears and overcoming obstacles.

The theme of innocence, particularly its transition to experience or loss is a central motif explored by numerous authors across genres and eras. William Blake in his poem *The Chimney Sweeper*, contrast the purity and joy of innocence with the harsh realities of experience. Mark twain in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* represents that Huck's journey down the Mississippi river is both literal and metaphorical, transition from innocence to a deeper understanding of morality, society, and personal freedom. Lewis Carroll in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* explores the bewilderment of a child encountering the absurdities of the adult world. The story contrasts the playful innocence of childhood with the arbitrary rules and logic of experience

The Journey from innocence to experience is a recurring theme in his works. This theme in *The BFG* (Big Friendly Giant, *The Witches* and *The Magic Finger* manifests through the development of young protagonists who are confronted with harsh realities forcing them to grow emotionally and intellectually.

The fictitious works, *The Witches*, *The BFG* and *The Magic Finger* illustrate the journey from innocence to experience as a transformative process. The protagonists are thrust into situations that require them to grow beyond their years. In Dahl's narrative universe innocence is not a state to be mourned instead experience is celebrated as a path to improvement and deeper understanding. Sophie's journey is one of the empowerment. Her collaboration with the BFG suggests that courage and moral integrity can overcome the most daunting challenges. The unnamed boys' journey from innocence to experience portrays inevitable and empowered. His transformation is not framed as a loss but as a necessary adoption to an unforgiving world, reiterate, resilience and ingenuity. The theme of Innocence is embodied in the unnamed eight-year-old girl, a protagonist who possesses a powerful yet uncontrollable magical ability in her finger. Her innocence is reflected in her emotions, sense of injustice and the way she uses her power.

In the fiction, *The Witches*, the protagonist, an unnamed boy begins the story as an innocent trusting child. The boy lives a normal life with his grandmother till he learns about existence of the witches who despise children. His initial naive outlook is shaped by his loving relationship with his grandmother who introduces him to the existence of witches. The journey from innocence to experience

begins when he directly encounters the witches discovering their sinister intentions to eliminate all children. The unnamed boy's abrupt departure from childhood innocence symbolizes his transformation into a mouse. After being turned into mouse by the witches, the boy uses his new form to his advantage. Alongside his grandmother, he devises a plan to destroy the witches, showing bravery and ingenuity. This transformation forces him to adopt a pragmatic and resourceful approach to life abandoning the naivety. The boy collaborates with his grandmother to thwart the witches' plans. This teamwork highlights his growth into a courageous self-reliant individual who prioritizes the greater good over personal despair. This transformation signifies his shift from an innocent child to a resourceful and resilient hero.

In *The BFG* Sophie, an orphan begins her journey as a lonely vulnerable child who is abruptly introduced to the existence of giants. Her initial fear of *The BFG* reflexes her innocent and lack of understanding of the complexities of good evil. As Sophie befriends *The BFG* she loves to distinguish between appearance and true character an essential part of our maturation. Sophie's' adventures with the *BFG* expose her to the world of giants and dreams. She learns about the malevolent giants who consume human beings which shadows her shelter perspective of the world. Together, they plan to stop the other more dangerous giants, leading to a friendship with the queen and recognition of their bravery. She becomes an active participant in dividing a plan to stop the evil giant's demons setting or emerging confidence and resourcefulness. Unlike the comforting narratives of childhood, she is exposed to danger and moral ambiguity. Her journey transforms her from a scared orphan to a courageous heroin.

In *The Magic Finger*, the unnamed protagonists, a young girl represents Innocence but possesses a mysterious power, her magic finger which activates at the time of anger or perceived injustice. Initially her worldview is simple; she sees actions in terms of right or wrong, particularly condemning the Gregg's family hunting habits. Her impulsive use of the magic finger transforms the Gregg's into bird like creatures, forcing them to empathize with their prey.

### **Critical Perspective of the fiction's**

Roald Dahl's *The Witches* and *The BFG* and *The Magic Finger* are celebrated for their imaginative story telling and underlying moral themes. A critical perspective on this work reveals their exploration of complex idea like the nature of good and evil, societal norms and the empowerment of marginalized individuals. The witches present a darker view of the world where danger lurks behind seemingly ordinary facades. The witch who masquerades as a kind woman subvert expectations and challenge the readers' trust in appearances. This reflects Dahl's recurring theme of the world's hidden threats and the need for vigilance. The authority figures in the witches especially adult are often complicit in the threads children's face the boy protagonist and his grandmother form a unique Bond suggesting the value of unconventional wisdom and love over societal expectation despite being transformed into a mouse. The protagonist does not despair instead he and his grandmother devise a plan to fight the witches this shift from victim hood to agency aligns with Dahl's broader message of empowerment. Especially for children, the witches extermination is presented as a triumphant resolution. Yet it rises moral questions about the protagonist actions. Dahl blurs the line between good and evil, forcing readers to consider the ethics of revenge and survival.

In *The BFG*, unlike traditional portrayal of giant as malevolent being the *BFG* is gentle kind and misunderstood. Dahl challenges stereotypes suggesting that kindness and individuality often thrive outside societal norms. The contrast between the caring *BFG* and the human world highlights societal flaws. Humans are depicted as war mongering, careless, and sometimes more monstrous than the giants themselves. Sophie an orphan, initially powerless finds strength in her alliance with the big friendly giant. Together they challenge both the violent giants and the dismissive human authorities, showing that unity

and determination can overcome great odds. The BFG's unique speech pattern and Dream catching reflect Dahl's celebration of creativity and the power of imagination to build bridges between different.

In *The Magic Finger*, themes of morality, power, and empathy within a deceptively simple narrative are found. Gregg's transformation symbolizes the journey from ignorance to understanding. This new found vulnerability as birds teaches them the value of life reflecting a shift from a selfish childlike personality to a more empathetic nature one. The girl's use of the magic finger highlights the power consequences of action while her motives are pure her magic irreversible affects demonstrate the complexity of moral decisions an awakening from the simplicity to innocence.

**CONCLUSION:**

Roald Dahl masterfully weaves these transitions in his stories, allowing his characters to grow and learn, often turning adversity into an opportunity for personal development and triumph. His works often reflect belief in the resilience of children and their ability to navigate a complex world with courage intelligence and heart. The stories challenge the notion of childhood at the time of pure innocence instead presenting it as a period of dynamic growth.

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