



Western Norway
University of
Applied Sciences

MASTER'S THESIS

”Is everything all right at home?”

The Teacher's Role in the Representation of Child Maltreatment in *Matilda*, *The Illustrated Mum*, and *Goodnight Mister Tom*.

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I confirm that the work is self-prepared and that references/source references to all sources used in the work are provided, cf. Regulation relating to academic studies and examinations at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL), § 10

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Abstract – English

This master's thesis examines which roles the teacher characters are playing in the portrayal of child maltreatment in *Matilda* by Roald Dahl, *Goodnight Mister Tom* by Michelle Magorian, and *The Illustrated Mum* by Jacqueline Wilson. In these books, the reader is introduced to protagonists that are experiencing different forms of child maltreatment in their home situation. The protagonists also have teacher characters in their lives, filling different roles and having different functions to the plot. The characters in the books, and the relationships between them, are analyzed with the help of theory of character analysis and character relations, and by looking at structure and tradition in children's literature. The method is based on Rolf Gaasland (1999) and Jakob Lothe's (2000) theories about character analysis, and the Actantial Narrative Schema by Algirdas J. Greimas (referred in Hébert, 2013).

Teacher characters are often present in books where the protagonist is at an age where it would be natural for them to attend school. This also includes the books where child maltreatment is present as a theme. Creating a consciousness regarding how the teacher characters are portrayed in these situations, and how this portrayal is affected by the outside factors, has been the primary motivation behind this project. I think that this could help create a better image of the impression children get of the teacher character's ability to deal with these situations through the literature they read.

Finding in the close reading shows that, despite similarities in the protagonists' lives, there are significant differences regarding how the teacher characters are portrayed, and which roles they are given in the story. The thesis shows that the teacher characters often are portrayed as either good helpers and supporters of the protagonist, or "evil" opponents, working against the protagonist's main project. How the factors around the teacher characters seem to affect how they are portrayed is interesting. The factors in and around the protagonist the extent of the maltreatment, the biological parents and the role "the other adults" are given, seem to affect how the teacher characters are portrayed in the primary literature.

Abstract – Norwegian

Denne masteroppgaven undersøker hvilke roller lærerkarakterene spiller i fremstillingen av barnemishandling i *Matilda* av Roald Dahl, *Goodnight Mister Tom* av Michelle Magorian og *The Illustrated Mum* av Jacqueline Wilson. I disse bøkene møter vi protagonister som alle opplever ulike former for barnemishandling i hjemmet og som har lærerkarakterer i livene sine som opptrer i ulike roller og har ulike funksjoner til plottet. Karakterene i bøkene, og relasjonene mellom dem, er analysert ved hjelp av teori om karakteranalyse og karakterrelasjoner, og ved å se på strukturer og tradisjoner i barnelitteraturen. Metoden er basert på Rolf Gaasland (1999) og Jakob Lothe's (2000) teorier om karakteranalyse, og aktantmodellen av Algirdas J. Greimas (referert i Hébert, L., 2013).

Lærerkarakterer er ofte til stede i bøker med protagonister i skolealder, dette inkluderer også bøker hvor barnemishandling er blant temaene. Det å skape bevissthet rundt hvordan lærerkarakterene er fremstilt i disse situasjonene, og hvordan denne fremstillingen påvirkes av faktorene rundt, har vært hovedmotivasjonen bak prosjektet. Jeg mener at dette kan hjelpe til med å skape et bedre bilde av hvilket inntrykk barn får av lærerkarakterers evne til å takle slike situasjoner gjennom barnelitteraturen.

Funn i nærlesningene viser at det, til tross for en del likheter i protagonistenes liv, er store ulikheter på hvordan lærerkarakterene blir fremstilt, og hvilken rolle de blir gitt i historien. Oppgaven viser at lærerkarakterene ofte blir fremstilt som enten gode hjelpere og støttespillere for protagonistene, eller "onde" motstandere som arbeider mot protagonistens hovedprosjekt. Hvordan faktorene rundt lærerkarakteren ser ut til å påvirke hvordan de blir oppfattet, er også interessant. Forventninger i og rundt protagonisten, omfanget av mishandlingen, de biologiske foreldrene og rollen de andre voksenkarakterene er tildelt, virker alle å være sterke påvirkere av hvordan lærerkarakterene blir fremstilt i primærlitteraturen.

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THE TEACHER WONDERS BUT SHE DOESN'T ASK
IT'S HARD TO SEE THE PAIN BEHIND THE MASK
BEARING THE BURDEN OF A SECRET STORM
SOMETIMES SHE WISHES SHE WAS NEVER BORN

(BENTLEY, S. K. & CROSBY, R. 2001)

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and purpose of thesis

Traditionally in children's literature, the idea of home has been "[...] a place where the child is cared for, loved, and disciplined while waiting to become an adult" (Wilson & Short, 2012, p. 130). Often "[t]he child is unhappy and goes on a journey of wanderings and adventures to come home with a new appreciation for what was left behind" (p. 130). This, however, is not always the case. In some children's books, the home is not a safe and desired place to be.

Some characters are abandoned, some are abused, and some are deprived of their basic needs. What all of these characters have in common is that they experience child maltreatment in one way or another.

These children do not only exist in literature but also all over the real world. In 2016 the Norwegian child protective services received 58 254 notifications from either private persons or public employees (SSB, 2017). Most of these came from the police, teachers or the child protective services themselves. The teacher category is often also represented in children's books regarding the topic of child maltreatment. Some teacher characters are depicted as caring, loving and understanding, while some are seen as unpleasant, mean and careless. The roles these characters are given appear to have a strong connection to the lives of the protagonists, and their way of dealing with the maltreatment.

The reason I have chosen to focus on the teachers' role in situations of child maltreatment in children's literature is complex. One of the reasons is the lack of research on this specific field. The idea of doing research to fill in one of the gaps in the field intrigued me, and motivated me to write my thesis about this topic. The importance of seeing this part of literature in an academic light appeared to add to the field.

Central for this thesis is not only how the child maltreatment itself is portrayed in the primary literature, but also the role of the teacher characters in the stories. Teachers have the potential to play a big part in their pupils' lives. This potential can be used in different ways, both positively and negatively. The teachers in the books chosen as the primary literature in this thesis; *Matilda* by Roald Dahl, *The Illustrated Mum* by Jacqueline Wilson and *Goodnight Mister Tom* by Michelle Magorian, all play a central role in the lives of their pupils. Some are life changers in the best possible way, while others make the situation worse.

Dan Hade, professor of language and literacy at Penn State University, wrote that “(w)e think in stories. They are incredibly powerful in the lives of all humans - especially children” (Trotter, 2007). The effect stories have on children’s experience of the world could also affect their perception of maltreatment and how teachers deal with situations like these. Being aware of this, as a teacher, will be a support in helping pupils pick out books to read. This is also why I think that it is essential for teachers and parents to be aware of the books their pupils/ children are reading.

Cianciolo (1965) wrote; “Books can provide a source of psychological relief from the various pressures and concerns that stem from the things that happen to children.” Being aware of how reading about similar situations might help when it comes to helping children experiencing maltreatment in their own lives could help support and advise them further.

Another reason for writing about this is that I think that the topic of child maltreatment, and especially the teacher’s role in situations like these have received less focus in the teacher training than I believe is sufficient. During my teacher training, there has been focus on how to discover signs of child abuse, especially sexual abuse. Although this is very important, the extended focus on this form of abuse perhaps leaves less space for discussing other aspects of child maltreatment. The courses in “Pedagogikk og elevkunnskap” [Pedagogy and knowledge of pupils] have 27 points listed over what the students are supposed to know by the end of their education. The only one that can be seen as relevant to child maltreatment is “based on key framework factors in the school, could identify and act in relation to the professional, ethical challenges and dilemmas that he/she may encounter in his/her work at school”¹ (Høgskulen på Vestlandet, 2018). Even though this can be seen as relevant, it does not explicitly state that the students will be trained in dealing with child maltreatment. By writing about child maltreatment in this thesis, I hope to help raise awareness about the fact that maltreatment is something most children in Norway will meet, either in literature or in real life. Being aware of this could help teachers be more aware of the role the teacher characters are given in these books, and by this, how the readers perceive the teacher’s ability to act.

¹ Originally “på bakgrunn av sentrale rammefaktorer i skolen kunne identifisere og handle i forhold til yrkesetiske utfordringer og dilemmaer som han/hun kan møte i sitt arbeid i skolen”. My translation in the text.

² Originally: “en systematisk fremgangsmåte, der man undersøker og stiller spørsmål til sin

When searching for “omsorgssvikt” [child neglect] at the webpage of Bergen public library and the Deichman library in Oslo, the main findings were books with child maltreatment as their main theme, books to help children deal with maltreatment or non-fiction books made for adults (Deichman, 2018; Bergen Offentlige Bibliotek, 2018). Examples of these books are *Akvarium* by Gro Dahle, *Liten* by Stina Wirsén, and *Sveket. I. Barn i risiko- og omsorgssviktsituasjoner* by Kari Killén. I realized that I had never heard of most of the books on the lists, while some of the more popular books that only have child neglect as one of several themes were not represented on the list. These are the books that are not self-help books designed to help children deal with child maltreatment, textbooks for adults doing research on the topic, or books only focusing on this topic, but instead literary texts where the child maltreatment is used either as a tool to help the story develop, or is one of several themes in the story. I decided to exclusively focus on the books with child maltreatment as one of several themes because I think that being aware of these books, and especially the teacher characters, can help me become a better teacher character in a child’s story of maltreatment.

Child maltreatment is not a new theme in literature. It can be found in traditional fairy tales, such as ‘Hansel and Gretel’ and ‘Snow White’ and literary classics, such as *Oliver Twist* and *Annie*. These examples, and several other similar stories, have child/adolescent maltreatment as a central *function* to the plot. This means that the maltreatment is a part of the story to help it move along, rather than something that is explicatively discussed as a theme. This is also the case in the primary literature in this thesis. The stories would not have happened if it were not for the maltreatment. Still, the characters and the plot is the main focus of the stories.

What all of these examples, and the primary literature, has in common is the wicked parent, stepparent, head of the orphanage or other caregiver. These characters have become a traditional and “cliché” character in many stories, both fairytales, and others. This character becomes a mean and unsympathetic person who’s only mission is to make life hard for the protagonist, working against the mission of the main character. They are often central to the plot development, and are also important in this thesis.

Within the topic of child maltreatment, several subtopics would be interesting to look into. Because of the scope of the thesis, I have chosen to mainly focus on active and passive mental and physical maltreatment, and will also mention neglect, including medical and educational

neglect. If the maltreatment is active or passive is determined by the intentions of the person behind the actions (Fahrman, 1993). Medical neglect is when the child is kept from the medical attention it needs, while educational neglect is when the child is not provided with the education the law states (LaMance, 2018; Hamblen, 2018). The different types of maltreatment will be further discussed and defined in the theory chapter. The reason for this limitation is partly because these are the most present forms of maltreatment in the chosen literature.

1.2. Thesis statement and research questions

The project is based on my interest in the way teachers are portrayed in children's literature. This, in combination with my concern about the portrayal of child maltreatment in children's literature, forms the basis of my thesis statement. The project's thesis statement is:

Which roles do the teacher characters play in the representation of child maltreatment in *Matilda* by Roald Dahl, *Goodnight Mister Tom* by Michelle Magorian and *The Illustrated Mum* by Jacqueline Wilson?

In order to answer this, three research questions have been formulated.

- How is child maltreatment presented in the chosen books?
- Which roles are the teachers given in the books?
- How is the teacher character's role affected by the protagonist, the biological parents, the extent of the maltreatment and "the other adults"?

One of the reasons *Matilda*, *Goodnight Mister Tom*, and *The Illustrated Mum* were chosen as primary literature for this thesis is the difference in how they portray child maltreatment and the differences in which role the teachers are given. Much like in the real world, the characters experience maltreatment in different ways. They also have different ways of coping with it. In the same way, both real and fictional teachers deal differently with their pupils experiencing maltreatment. These differences were important in the process of choosing the books because it would provide a more nuanced look at child maltreatment in children's literature.

1.3. Previous research on the primary literature

This section will discuss some previous research on *Matilda*, *The Illustrated Mum*, and *Goodnight Mister Tom*, and demonstrate what my project adds to the field. There has previously been done research on these books and the authorships linked to them. To my knowledge, however, there has never been a comparative study of the three books, looking at the topic of child maltreatment in general, and the teacher's role more specifically. I hope that this will lead to this thesis bringing light to parts of the literature that has not been focused on previously.

There has been conducted a considerable amount of research linked to the books written by Roald Dahl. Due to this, *Matilda* is the most researched book in the primary literature. As well as other topics, the child maltreatment aspect of his stories has been widely discussed. Eileen Donaldson wrote about Dahl:

The worlds in which he places his young characters are lonely, frightening, and often operate through relationships that have cruelty as their base. Dahl however does not leave his characters stranded. He injects magic into their worlds and it is inevitably through this spell weaving that Dahl binds the children into new, loving familiar relationships. (2004, p. 131)

She also included the aspect of there being a connection between the social aspect and the home life. "If the parent is either abusive or absent, the child will experience extreme difficulty in social relationships and in the development of self-esteem" (Donaldson, 2004, p. 134).

In *Roald Dahl*, Pat Pinsent (2012) describes that educational figures often are reoccurring characters in the literary world of Roald Dahl. Many of his stories, including his memoir, *Boy*, have parts of the plot set to school situations and include educational figures. Pinsent mentions the contrast between the two teacher characters in *Matilda* and writes about the "angelic Miss Honey, who recognizes her pupil's potential, and the brutal Miss Trunchbull, who is adamant about the limitations of young children [...]" (Pinsent, 2012, p. 70). She attributes this to Dahl's childhood, where he experienced what he considered to be violent and even close to sadistic teachers. Many of his literary pieces can be linked to his views about the school systems, and with his conception of the weaknesses within the system. The fact that Dahl had strong beliefs about the educational system makes the teacher figures in his stories

even more interesting to analyze. Dahl's way of using humor and exaggerations somehow neutralizes the seriousness of the characters and topic.

Pinsent also points out the general portrayal of adult-child relationship in Dahl's literature. In his books, most of the protagonists seem to have been abandoned by, or have a challenging relationship with, their birth parents (Pinsent, 2012). Several critiques have over the years discussed, among other aspects, Dahl's portrayal of characters and character relations (Petzold, 1992). Pinsent writes about how Dahl himself portrayed all adults, in particular adult men, as dangerous and mean, based on his own experiences in early childhood. Further, the aspects of Dahl's humorous way of writing are being discussed, and the critique he received on this is mentioned.

Dahl's fiction offers, veiled in humor and parody, the cruelty of the adult, and represents the family, home and school as potential places of torture and misery; his books rely on the grotesque and have been condemned, especially by critics such as Dieter Petzold and David Rees, for being too clear cut in classifying adults as either good or bad. (Pinsent, 2012, p.87)

Lastly, I want to mention Beauvais' (2015) theory of Matilda functioning as a fairy godmother for Miss Honey if she is seen as the subject of the story. Arguing this would provide a different view of the story. Even if this is will not be the main point of view of the analysis, it provides an interesting aspect of the story.

Vanessa Joosen (2015) included *The Illustrated Mum* in her research on how child characters react to the childlike behavior of the adult characters. The article, called "Childlike Parents in Guus Kuijer's *Pooleke* Series and Jacqueline Wilson's *The Illustrated Mum*," discusses the parent character's roles in the book series/ book, mainly focusing on the childlike aspects of the parent characters. The text discusses how it can be perceived as fun when adult characters can show their childlike sides when it is clear that they are in control and can stop when it is no longer acceptable to act like that. This is a central element in the maltreatment situation in the book. Joosen discusses the adult-child relationship in *The Illustrated Mum* and shortly mentions the neglect in the story. However, she does not mention the teacher and the school's role.

Goodnight Mister Tom is the book in the primary literature I was able to find the least previous research on. While the characters and topic of the other two books in the primary literature have been researched previously, most of the research mentioning this book has been about the historical aspects of the book. *Goodnight Mister Tom* is set to a more specific period than the other books, and the historical aspect of World War II is very much present in the story. In 1994 Barton and Smith conducted a study in several countries, where they selected books regarding the impact of World War II on children and used these as a base for a study about using historical fiction when teaching about World War II and the Holocaust. *Goodnight Mister Tom* was one of these books.

1.4. Taboo in Children's Literature

In children's literature, some topics have a more extensive history than others. While topics such as friendship, family and common issues children face growing up are written thousands of books about every year, there are still some topics that are considered taboo within children's literature. These are often the topics that some grown-ups feel like we should protect children from. This is done by not telling them about it, and also not presenting them with books on the topic. Strongly taboo topics, such as incest and sexual abuse, have not traditionally been dealt with in literature for children. This does, however, appear to be changing. For the past years more books have been published about what previously was seen to be inappropriate for children.

In Norway, we have some authors, such as Gro Dahle, who for the past years have made picture books for children about topics that many find hard to talk to children about. These are topics such as sexual abuse, incest, and parents struggling with mental illness. *Sinna Mann* (2003), *Blekkspruten* (2016), *Håret til mamma* (2007) and *Akvarium* (2014) are all examples of these books. The topic is precisely presented and not hidden behind other elements of the story, and is therefore easy to use in conversations with children about these topics. Other authors have also, for the past years, been writing about topics that only some years ago would have been considered inappropriate for children. Unlike the books in the primary literature, most of these books are made for younger children.

Looking to English speaking countries, there are also examples of books discussing this topic. For the younger children most of the books I was able to find appeared to be in the previously

discussed “self-help” category. Several books dealing with how to talk to children about being touched inappropriately are available. It does; however, appear to be in the category of books for teenagers these topics seem to be most present. Books such as *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* are discussing topics such as suicide and sexuality. However, topics like this are more common in literature for this age group. The age group for the primary literature for this thesis is 8-12-year-olds. Because of this I will not further examine this category of books.

1.5. Structure of thesis

The thesis consists of six main chapters. After the introduction there is a theory and method chapter, creating the theoretical background for the thesis. After the theory and method, there is a presentation of the primary literature. This includes general facts about the books, plot summaries and the reason behind choosing these books as my primary literature. Then comes the analysis. This part consists of an analysis of each book, based on the theory provided. Second to last there is a discussion chapter where the different books will be discussed in relation to each other and the focus questions. Lastly, there will be some final reflections before the literature used will be presented.

2. Theory and Method

This part of the thesis will function as a theoretical and methodical background for the analysis and discussion. The main theoretical aspects in this thesis will be centered around the characters' roles and functions and the character relations in order to provide an answer to the thesis statement. The characters in the books, and the relationships between them, are analyzed with the help of theory on character analysis and character relations, and by looking at structure and tradition in children's literature. The method is based on Rolf Gaasland (1999) and Jakob Lothe's (2000) theories about character analysis, and the Actantial Narrative Schema by Algirdas J. Greimas (referred in Hébert, 2013).

The thesis will be based on a literary analysis of elements in the three books chosen as primary literature. Andersen, Mose, and Norheim define the theoretical method of literature study as "a systematic process, where you examine and question a thing, meaning the object, to acquire knowledge"² (2012, p. 18). This means that the reader acquires knowledge from an object, in this case the book, by examining and asking questions aimed at the literature. By using this method, the reader is free to question and examine chosen concepts and elements that are set in the book.

The methods and theories used in this thesis have been chosen because of their ability to help answer the research questions. In order to make the answers as easily accessible to the reader as possible, there are several theories and ideas from different theorists in use. There are, however, two primary means used to provide structure and clarity to the analysis and discussion. A combination of Lothe and Gaasland's (2000 & 1999) structures for character analysis will be used to examine the characters, and, through them, the maltreatment situations. The main structure of the analysis is based on the Actantial Narrative Schema by Algirdas J. Greimas in order to get a clear view of the relations and functions of the characters (referred i Hébert, L., 2013). The schema is a structure developed to get a schematically view of the relations between the different characters. It consists of the roles subject, object, helper, opponent, sender, and receiver, and shows how the characters are placed in relation to each other.

² Originally: "en systematisk fremgangsmåte, der man undersøger og stiller spørgsmål til sin gjenstand, det vil si objektet, for å oppnå viten." My translation in the text.

In all three books in the primary literature for this thesis, the aspect of adoption and foster care is present. Ruth Meese (2012) wrote an article concerning adoption and foster care in children's literature. She mainly focuses on two points; how children will react to reading about these topics, and what teachers should be aware of when choosing literature to use in the classroom. In the process, Meese provides the reader with guidelines for choosing literature about adoption and foster care when reading to or with children (2012, p. 134). Among these guidelines, she emphasizes that the teacher should be prepared and aware when reading books concerning these topics, especially if there is a child in the room that has personal experience with the foster system or adoption. This, and the discussions that could arise while reading stories regarding these topics, is something she focuses on and claims that is important for teachers to have a conscious idea about.

2.1. Terms and definitions

The most common terms used in literature on child maltreatment are "child neglect," "child abuse" and "child maltreatment." Even though these are commonly used terms, the definitions are many and varied. To decide which of the terms to use in this thesis, several definitions and terms were considered. In order to clarify my choice of using the term "child maltreatment," this chapter will provide some insight into the different options, as well as an explanation on what parts of child maltreatment I have chosen to focus on in this thesis.

Several theorists and organizations use, divide and define the different terms regarding this topic. MedicineNet is an American network made up of U.S. Board-Certified Physicians and Allied Health Professionals who are working to provide the public with current, comprehensive medical information. Although MedicineNet uses the term "child maltreatment" several times, they do not define the term. They do, however, define child abuse as "when a caregiver either fails to provide appropriate care (neglect), purposefully inflicts harm, or harms a child while disciplining him or her" (Medicinenet, 2018). They state that while the caregiver is typically the parent of the child, other adults, and teenagers, such as teachers and babysitters, can also play the part of caregiver. Further on they divide child neglect into four main categories; physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse (Medicinenet, 2018).

Monica Fahrman (1993) does, on the other hand, use the term maltreatment, and divides this into five different categories: active physical maltreatment, passive physical maltreatment, active mental maltreatment, passive mental maltreatment, and sexual abuse. The main aspect of her article is the concept of maltreatment being either active or passive. What Fahrman considered to be active maltreatment is when the caregiver consciously hurts the child or repeatedly and consciously avoids providing the child with the love and care it needs. Passive maltreatment will, on the other hand, be when the caregiver hurts the child without wanting to do it, but simply because they for some reason is unable to treat the child the way a child should be treated. Passive child maltreatment often occurs due to caregiver's mental health problems, or other issues in the caregiver's life (Fahrman, 1993). These are the terms that mostly will be used in this thesis because I think they are the ones that provide the best explanation to the types of maltreatment in the primary literature.

There are also several mentions of different subcategories when it comes to neglect. The most relevant for this thesis is medical and educational neglect. Ken LaMance (2018) defines educational neglect as "a parent's failure to provide for a child's basic needs with regards to school and education." Katie Hamblen (2018) defines medical neglect as "a parent's failure to provide adequate medical or dental care for their child, especially when it is needed to treat a serious physical injury or illness." There are also other subcategories of child maltreatment, but as they are not as relevant for the thesis, they will not be mentioned.

To provide this thesis with as much clarity as possible, it is essential to make it clear how the term child maltreatment will be used throughout the thesis. All of the definitions above have elements that provide the term with new and important features and will be considered. Focusing on all of the elements would however provide for a too long analysis. That is why only some of the elements from the different definitions will be included. The aspects of active and passive physical and mental abuse, as well as child neglect, will be the main focus of this thesis. However, in some of the books the aspects of medical and educational neglect are central to the plot development, and in order to get the full image of the maltreatment situations. In these situations, these aspects of the maltreatment will also be present in the analysis.

2.2. Character's role and function and character relations

The characters in a story are the “acting bodies; it is they who are moving the story forward. (...) The persons are presented to us through their actions, their statements and thoughts, their appearance, comments from other people or the narrator's comments³” (Nikolajeva, 2001, p. 58). According to this quote, the characters are the ones that make the plot develop, and the storyline progress. This means that their role in the story is vital for the plot development.

In most stories, there are more than one character, and they all have their own roles and functions. In literature for adults, you seldom find a sole character, living and acting in complete isolation. There will almost certainly be at least one other character present in the plot. One of few examples of stories where the character is indeed isolated is Robinson Crusoe, but even he found a companion. In children's literature, the human relationships are considered to be even more important, and human isolation is even more seldom. This is also the case in some of the child versions of Robinson Crusoe, where the companion appears even earlier than in the original (Nikolajeva, 2002 p. 110). There are also some relationships that are more important in children's literature than in literature for adults. Examples of these are, for obvious reasons, relationships with parents or guardians, teachers and siblings (Nikolajeva, 2002, p. 111).

Jacob Lothe provides a tool for character analysis in his book *Narrative in Film and Fiction – An Introduction* (2000) when he distinguishes between what he considers to be the two kinds of character indicators: direct definition and indirect presentation. He defines a *direct definition* as when “a character is characterized in a direct, summarizing way – for instance by means of adjectives and abstract nouns” (p. 81). He follows up by writing about how this is most efficient when the narrator appears as authoritative or omniscient. *Indirect presentation* is, on the other hand, a bigger category where more aspects of the characters are present. Lothe states that “[t]his form of characterization is the more important of the two main variants. It demonstrates, dramatizes, or exemplifies a given character feature rather than naming it explicitly” (p. 82). This category is again divided into four subcategories, all dealing with different aspects of the indirect presentation. These subcategories are: action, speech, external appearance and behavior, and milieu. Action is the presentation of something

³ Original text: ”agerende instanser; det er dem, der udfører handlingen. (...) Personerne præsenteres for os gennem deres handlinger, deres udtalelser og tanker, deres udseende, kommentarer fra andre personer eller fortællerens kommentarer.” My translation in the text.

someone does, either once or several times throughout the story. Speech includes both what the characters say and think, including “dialogue, direct speech, or free indirect discourse [...]” (p. 83). External appearance and behavior are the actions and looks of a characters often observed by either the narrator or the other characters. Lastly, the milieu includes the external surroundings that somehow can contribute to the indirect presentation of a character (p. 84). Lothe stresses that the “[v]arious elements of characterization are as a rule combined with one another in the discourse” (p. 84). What is important to mention here is the fact that not all of the elements in the structures will be mentioned in all of the character analysis in this thesis. There will be made a decision in each case about which aspects is the most central in order to best see the elements in the characters that are important to the thesis.

In an analysis of a character, several elements need to be considered. Rolf Gaasland (1999) mentions four central concepts to consider in a literary analysis in his book *Fortellerens hemmeligheter: innføring i litterær analyse*. Namely there are two main sources of character information, the difference between character’s characteristics and the character’s functions, the identifying and grading of personality traits in the characters and typologies. The first aspect he points out is that there typically are two sources of character information; the narrator and the characters. Who the source of the character information is, can have a strong influence on how the characters are portrayed. These two sources are divided into the information the characters provide about themselves, the information the other characters provide and what the narrator is telling. The reliability of the character/ narrator is something the reader needs to be aware of as it may affect the reliability of the description. The next aspect to be pointed out is the difference between the characters characteristics and their functions. By characteristics Gaasland means the features that a character is made up from, creating their personality and character. By functions, he means what the character is put in the story to do, why the character is part of the plot. The difference between these aspects needs to be a part of an analysis not only when focusing on characters, but also more abstract features like child maltreatment. When is the maltreatment used as a function and when it is uses as a characteristic on a character or character relationships? The third aspect Gaasland focuses on is identifying and grading personality traits in characters. First, the traits need to be identified and presented. Here it is necessary to focus on the traits that make the characters stand out from the others. After that, the traits need to be graded according to importance. This is not important to do in detail but to give the reader a better idea of the importance of the different personality traits in the characters. The last aspect Gaasland focuses on is

typologies. By this, he means what general person/ character type the characters fall in to (Gaasland, 1999, pp. 95 - 110). All of the elements will not be central to all of the character analysis. The elements that are the most central in order to best understand the important aspects of the characters will be included when later analyzing the most central characters in the books.

There are several elements in the two theories that include the same aspects of character analysis. Lothe's categories will be the main focus of this thesis. In addition, some of Gaasland's elements have been included in order to fully be able to grasp the characters and their relations to each other. The main aspect of Gaasland that is included is his character characteristics or role versus their function. This is especially important when analyzing the third research question regarding how the protagonist, the biological parents, the extent of the maltreatment and "the other adults" affect the teacher character's role.

Maria Nikolajeva states that literary characters only are constructions made to tell a story and without free will. This makes them unable to make their own decisions, and behave and act like real living people. The characters have been handed a set of frames to stay within, and this challenges their ability to act (Nikolajeva, 2002). This is important to be aware of while analyzing characters and their function on the stories.

The three main groups of characters that will be relevant for this thesis are the protagonist (the child being maltreated,) the parents (this being the biological parents) or other adults (neighbors, friend's parents, adoptive/ foster parents and so on) and the teacher characters (this also including other employees in the schools the protagonist attends.)

2.2.1. Protagonist

The protagonist is the main character of the story. The books in the primary literature were chosen based on the protagonist's home situation and their experiences with the teacher characters present in their lives. The protagonists in the three books are both alike and different. They are all children aged between five and ten experiencing some form of maltreatment. They also all go to school and have at least one teacher character that somehow affects their lives, and they have some interaction with the foster care system or adoption. Apart from this, they live entirely different lives in different time periods, and their

personalities and ways of dealing with things happening in their lives are also quite different. Using three so different protagonists in a comparative study leaves room for the analysis to focus the same aspects of their stories from different angles. In *The Illustrated Mum* the protagonist is also the focalizer and the first-person narrator.

2.2.2. The parents and the other adults

In *Matilda*, *The Illustrated Mum* and *Goodnight Mister Tom* there are several adult characters present in the plot. Some of these characters, mainly the biological parents, are the ones responsible for the majority of the maltreatment. Without them, the story would not have the same plot; therefore their role and function are central for the plot development. The amount of time these characters are present in the books varies a lot. They do however play a central part in creating the protagonist's mental and physical starting point in the story.

The parents are not the only adult characters in the primary literature. Apart from the characters that somehow are connected to the protagonist's school situation, the reader is introduced to foster parents, neighbors, the parents of other characters and so on. Nikolajeva (2002) wrote that "[i]n classic books, there is often an elderly female relative who has the role of a fairy godmother and helps the protagonist in different situations" (p. 118). The elderly female relative is not present in any of the books chosen as primary literature in this thesis. Parts of this characteristic do however fit in with characters from the books and will therefore be included in the discussion.

2.2.3. Teachers and teacher characters

Like the statistics read, many of the reports of alleged child maltreatment come from teachers and other school staff (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2017). Teachers spend many hours with their pupils every day and are likely to see if anything seems off, and if the behavior of the child changes. This sets them in a unique position in discovering child maltreatment. When using the term "teacher characters," I mean the characters that work in the protagonist's school or a school like situation. This includes librarians, both in school libraries and public libraries, tutors and other adults working in the protagonist's school.

Nikolajeva (2002) presents the term *in loco parentis*, focusing on the adult characters that stand in when the parents for some reason are unable to take care of their children. When introducing this, the aspect of *who* these characters are, become central.

“*In loco parentis*, “instead of parents,” describes the most common situation in children’s fiction, when a substitute parent is provided for the young character, either because the real parent is permanently removed, or because he or she is insufficient in offering the support and guidance necessary for the child’s growth. The substitute figure may be a grandparent or other relative, a foster parent, a teacher or in fact any adult” (p. 118).

Here she brings up the characters that could function as the primary or secondary caregiver as a substitute for the biological parents. What I find particularly interesting in this quote, is the teacher’s possibility to function as a primary caregiver. This structure is present in all of the primary literature, as the analysis will further expand on.

2.3. Structure and tradition – The Postmodern Metaplot

In order to fully grasp the structures of the books, and by this all the aspects of the plot, the different forms of structure, and traditions within this are central to be aware of. The situation of *home* is important in most children’s books. Therefore, being aware of this can help understand the aspects of the protagonists lives, including the maltreatment situation, better.

Images of home abound in children's literature, not only in houses, such as the little house in the big woods, but in a variety of other places, such as Tom's midnight garden, the Island of the Blue Dolphins, the yellow brick road (...). Many critics have noted the celebration of place in children's literature (Wolf, 1990, p. 54).

Traditionally the home in children’s literature has been central for the progression of the story. The traditional structure of stories for children has been a home – away – home structure, where the protagonist starts his or her journey at home, but leaves to go on some kind of journey or adventure. In these stories the child is the one leaving the home-situation, making a conscious choice to leave the home with everything that entails behind. This would also include leaving the adult caretaker, that being a parent or other custodian. After the quest is completed, the protagonist would return to the safeness and comfort of home (Wilson & Short, 2011).

By contrast, the Postmodern Metaplot (Wilson & Short, 2011) provides a twist on the classical home away – home - structure. Melissa B. Wilson identified the structure in 2009. It provides a twist to the classic home-away-home structure. This happens by presenting how some stories are built up, not by the child leaving a safe home and returning to the same one once the adventure is over, but by the child being abandoned by, or abandoning, their caregiver, and ends up being left to create a new home situation for themselves (Wilson & Short, 2011). “In a postmodern metaplot the child leaves from a place the child doesn’t (or can’t) consider home to go on a journey, psychological or literal, to a new home that the child has constructed” (p. 134). In the end, the child would have created a safe and new home for itself and is then able to lead the adult, or a new adult carer, into a hopeful ending, a home.

As I will argue in the analysis chapter, this structure is a key feature in all three of the primary literature in this thesis. All of the protagonists are in some way or another sent on this journey from the home and is then forced to create a home away from home.

2.4. Method - Literary analysis

Literary analysis can be focused towards a spectrum of aspects, ranging from characters to setting to the usage of colors in the illustrations. In a literary analysis the phenomena that is being explored will have to be defined and seen in the light of relevant theory. Literary analysis is an open and flexible method, where choices regarding which parts of the literature to focus on will affect the analysis and discussion. This sets the thesis in risk of becoming too subjective, and the reliability could be put at risk. This is the reasons why connecting the analysis and discussion to relevant theory will be important in order for the thesis to be reliable (Gaasland, 1999). Focusing on all aspects of literary analysis will be impossible within the frames that are set for this thesis, so choosing some will be essential to the execution of the project. Therefore, I have chosen to do a literary analysis with a particular focus on characters and character relations. This is to provide a stronger sense of how the characters are, and how they interact with one another, affects the portrayal of child maltreatment and the teacher’s role in these situations. Naturally, by only focusing on this aspect of the primary literature, parts of the stories will be left out. However, this is something that needed to be done in order to execute the project within the provided frames. Analyzing the literature with focus on different aspects of a literary analysis would be interesting and could potentially provide a different or wider view on the books.

2.4.1. Character relations and functions - The Actantial Narrative Schema

The relationships between the characters are an important aspect in the analysis. To look at these relationships, I have chosen to use the Actantial Narrative Schema developed by Algirdas Julien Greimas in 1983. This is in order to gain a clearer view of the relationships between the characters, and a sense of which roles and functions the characters are given in the text. Even though this schema traditionally has been used in analyzing fairytales and folktales, I have used it in analyzing the novels used as primary literature in this thesis. I think it provides a clear and straightforward structure of the analysis, which is the reason why I have decided to use it as a base for the analysis. However, it is important to be aware of the challenges that come with using a method in a different way than it was originally intended.

The schema originated from the ideas from Vladimir Propp. In *Morphology of the Folktale*, Propp (1968) identified seven roles, the hero, the false hero (a character that does more or less the same as the hero, but fails), the object of the quest (often a princess), dispatcher, donor, helper and villain (Nikolajeva, 2002; Propp, 1968). A. J. Greimas (1983) developed a structural schema based on Propp's character roles. The schema was developed to allow the reader to divide action into six parts, or actants, those being subject, object, sender, receiver, helper, and opponent. The subject is who does or does not want to be joined to the object. The sender is what starts the action, while the receiver is what benefits from it. The helper helps the subject, while the opponent tries to hinder the subject (Hébert, 2013). subject (Hébert, 2013). This schema was made to be able to analyze any real or fictional situation theoretically, but has traditionally been used mainly in fairytales and folktales. A structural approach to the schema could look like this:

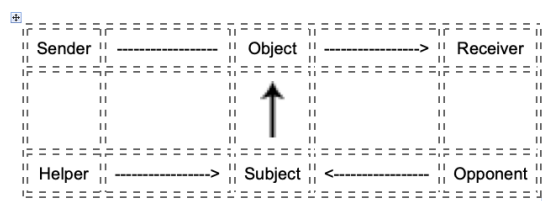


Figure 1: The Actantial Narrative Schema (as shown in Hébert, 2013).

The axis between the subject and the object is called the axis of desire; the axis from sender to receiver is called the axis of transmission or the axis of knowledge, while the axis from helper to opponent is called the axis of power (Hébert, 2013). This will be central in looking at the

relations between the characters, and the roles they are given and what they imply in the progress of the story.

In order for the schema to work for the primary literature, I have made a small change in the structure. The category of “sender” has been turned into “sender/ catalyst”. This is because the stories analyzed in the material often miss the typical fairytale element of a sender, as no clear thing or person is starting the action. In order to integrate this properly, the word “catalyst” has been added. By seeing it not only as a clear sender, but more as the reason behind the action starting, gives the model a broader usage and it also makes it fit more to the structure of the books used as primary literature in this thesis. A structural approach to this version of the schema could look like this:

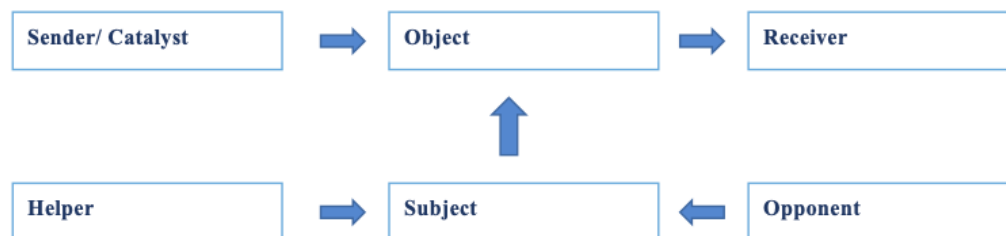


Figure 2: The Actantial Narrative Schema with changes

The purpose of using this schema in the character analysis is to provide a clear image of the character’s role and relations to each other. It is important to be aware of the fact that one character in a narrative can function as more than one actant. The characters could fill more than one actant, like Miss Honey in Matilda, that throughout the story functions as a helper and receiver. Using the Actantial Narrative Schema makes it easier to view the character relations from outside the book, and also when discussing the characters role versus their function. The structure of the analysis will roughly be based on the different actants. The schema is used as a tool for organizing the analysis, allowing me to focus in particular on roles and relationships.

Lastly, it is important to mention that the characters have been placed based on my reading of the book. While other readers might place them differently, this is how I thought was the best and most precise way. Also the fact that the schema only is based on what I consider to be the

main project of the story is important. Looking at other projects the characters would have been placed differently.

3. Presentation of and reasoning for material

After looking at several children's books, both by Scandinavian, British and American authors, I decided to narrow my primary literature down to three books. They are all written by British authors and were first published between 1988 and 1999. To provide a better understanding of why I decided these books to be my primary literature, this part of the thesis will provide the list of criteria used in the selection, the reasons for choosing each book individually, and a presentation of each book.

3.1. Reasoning for material

The decision of choosing *Matilda* by Roald Dahl, *The Illustrated Mum* by Jacqueline Wilson and *Goodnight Mister Tom* by Michelle Magorian was made for several reasons. The selection criteria were made to choose books that provides a range of different forms of maltreatment and teacher reactions, but also had a similar base that made them easier to compare. The fact that all of the books were published in the same country within a time frame of a few years provided this base of comparability. These were my criteria for the literature:

- Recommended for more or less the same age group, being 8-12-year-olds.
- Have child maltreatment as one of several themes.
- Have a young protagonist experiencing child maltreatment in one or more ways.
- The protagonists have at least one biological parent that they are living with at least for parts of the story.
- The protagonist must go to the local school.
- The books should also be popular and have been widely read in Norway and/ or the UK.

There are however several differences in the book, providing a presentation of the different aspects of maltreatment and the teacher's roles. The role of the school and teachers is one example of an element that is different from book to book. This helps provide a wider perspective on the way the school system and the teachers are dealing with the situation. Another aspect that separates the books is the gender of the protagonists, the time for setting, length of the books, type, and extent of maltreatment and the teacher's role. While both

Matilda and *Goodnight Mister Tom* have been published in Norwegian, *The Illustrated Mum* is yet to be translated into Norwegian.

3.2. Setting and importance of time and space

The three different books used as primarily literature for this thesis are all set to different periods. Nikolajeva states that ” [w]e must further consider the fact that the role of characters in fiction varies between historical epochs and between genres” (Nikolajeva, 2002, p. x). This is a central aspect to be aware of when it comes to child maltreatment. What we would consider to be maltreatment today might have been considered a natural part of bringing up a child in the period the story is set to. Also, the importance of the place of the setting is important. Laws and rules regarding child maltreatment vary from country to country. In England, a law regarding hitting children was set to action in 2004. The law states “It is unlawful for a parent or carer to smack their child, except where this amounts to ‘reasonable punishment’” (Child Law Advice, n.d.). Comparing this to laws from other parts of the world would show the different starting points different readers would have.

While *Good Night Mr. Tom* is set to the Second World War, *The Illustrated Mum* and *Matilda* has no known time of setting. It can, however, be assumed that they are set in their contemporary times, respectively late 90s and late 80s. Time markers such a microwave (*Matilda*) and mobile phones (*The Illustrated Mum*) confirm this. *Good night Mr. Tom* is set during the Second World War. This is made known already on the first page of the book. During World War II, the views of child maltreatment were different than what we would see today. Still, the severity of the maltreatment in *Goodnight Mister Tom* leaves no doubt of the aspect of maltreatment, then or now. Also, the fact that the book is written by a contemporary author, including her conscious or unconscious ideas about child maltreatment, is present in her writing. Today’s readers will automatically assume something to be child maltreatment based on their own experiences and time frames. Therefore the time and place the story is set to is important to be aware of in the analysis of the books.

3.3. Matilda

3.3.1. About the book

Jonathan Cape publisher first published *Matilda* by Roald Dahl in 1988. The book is illustrated by Quentin Blake, who has illustrated most of Dahl's books. In 2010 the book was ranked number 18 in *The Top 100 Children's Novels Poll (#1-100)* by School Library Journal (School Library Journal, 2010). Even though it has been more than 30 years since the book was first published, it is still a popular book among young Norwegian readers. The last six months of 2018 the book was on loan 2634 times from the Norwegian public libraries, leaving it on a 62nd place among the most loaned children's books in Norway (bibsys, 2018). Dahl's authorship includes several children's books regarding topics such as magic and children getting revenge on cruel adult characters. This places *Matilda* straight into the list over his previous publications like *The Magic Finger* (1966), *George's Marvelous Medicine* (1981), *The Witches* (1983), etc.

3.3.2. Plot summary

Matilda Wormwood, a five-and-a-half-year-old girl, is not like other children her age. She shows remarkable abilities already from an early age, but due to her parents simply not caring about her, no one seems to notice her gift. To get her revenge on her parents' actions and carelessness she pulls pranks on them, like putting glue on her father's hat, leaving it stuck to his head. Matilda is exceptionally bright, and after discovering the library and meeting the librarian Mrs. Phelps, she reads all of the children's books before moving on to the classics.

When Matilda finally gets to start school, her teacher, Miss Honey, soon discovers her abilities. She tries to convince the headmistress, the tyrannical Miss Trunchbull, and Matilda's parents to move her to a higher grade but is refused to do so. The horrible Miss Trunchbull, who happens to be Miss Honey's aunt, causes trouble and spreads fear throughout the school. One day Matilda becomes so upset with her that she is able to move a glass of water using only her eyes. This turns out to be a great "weapon" for when she later helps Miss Honey get revenge on Miss Trunchbull for her awful childhood, and to get back the house Miss Trunchbull coldheartedly took from her. At the end of the book, Matilda's parents and brother need to leave the country to get away from the police and want to take Matilda with them. Miss Honey agrees to adopt her, and Matilda's parents are easily persuaded to leave her in the teacher's custody.

3.3.3. Why This Book Was Chosen

Matilda is a humorous, inspiring and magical story, filled with funny, scary, loving and unique characters. The realness and sadness of the obvious child neglect is shining through, but Matilda does not seem to be negatively affected by it personality wise. The two different teachers, Miss Honey and Miss Trunchbull, are also one of the main reasons why I chose this book. They represent two extremes in ways of treating Matilda and dealing with her home situation.

Roald Dahl is exceptionally popular among Norwegian children, teachers, and parents, which gives the thesis a link to the Norwegian culture and an educational context. Even though Matilda is experiencing the seriousness of child maltreatment, it has the magical touch from the literary world of Roald Dahl. Many of Dahl's characters are made funny and somehow, magical. Still, their "realness" always seems to shine through, giving the book a seriousness and depth that allows the reader to experience the true feelings of the characters.

3.4. The Illustrated Mum

3.4.1. About the book

The Illustrated Mum is written by Jacqueline Wilson and was first published in 1999. Nick Sharratt illustrated the book, as well as most of Wilson's other books. There are few illustrations in the story, limited to a small drawings in the beginning and end of each chapter, and a few others who supposedly is made by Dolphin. The book fits well into Wilson's authorship, both thematically and when it comes to the genre. Wilson has written books dealing with themes such as dysfunctional families, divorce, adoption, foster care, death and grief, and class/ poverty. Examples of these books are *The Story of Tracy Beaker* (1992), *Dustbin Baby* (2002), *Hetty Feather* (2009) and so on. All of these books deal with at least one of these topics, clearly creating a theme in Wilson's authorship.

3.4.2. Plot summary

Dolphin is a ten-year-old girl living with her older sister, Star, and their mother, Marigold, in an apartment in London. Marigold, a tattoo lover, has bipolar disorder and a drinking problem. This makes her at times unable to properly care for her daughters. Star is the one taking on the role of the parent when Marigold is unable to do so. While Dolphin adores her

mother, Star is annoyed and worried about their mother's behavior. Marigold has been talking about Mickey, Star's father for all of the girls' lives, and one night she meets him again at a concert and brings him home. It turns out that he never knew of Star, and is very eager to get to know his daughter. Star is over the moon, while Dolphin feels left out and abandoned by her sister. Mickey tries to connect with the girls. When Marigold figures out that Mickey has a girlfriend, she sets out to make him take her back instead. Mickey finds out more about Marigold's behavior and mental issues and invites both of the girls to come and live with him. While Star happily goes to live with her father, Dolphin stays loyal to her mother and does not move with her sister. A while after Star moves, Marigold has a mental breakdown, painting herself in toxic paint. Dolphin tries her best to help her but ends up having to call an ambulance. Marigold is admitted to a mental hospital. When this happens Dolphin and her friend Oliver sets out to find Dolphin's father. After finding him, he contact the child protective services. Dolphin gets placed in a loving foster home. She stays in contact with her father, who turns out to be a stable and loving person. Star appears in the same foster home as Dolphin after a while, having left her fathers home. He did not longer seem so interested in his "new" daughter, and Star realized that she would be happier back home. The sisters soon realize that they will always be a family, even though Marigold is still at the hospital and it is unknown if she will be able to take care of her daughters.

3.4.3. Why This Book Was Chosen

Dolphin as a character stands out from the others because she always is supporting and loving her mother, even though she is unable to provide her children with the care they need. Also, the fact that Dolphin is the narrator of the story provides the reader with a different point of view that in the other books. The fact that the reader can see that Marigold is struggling with a mental illness and alcohol dependency helps provide a look at the different reasons for, and types of, child maltreatment. There are two teachers mentioned in the book, Dolphin's primary teacher and the teacher that is in charge of the library at break time. The clear difference between the two teachers provides a wider specter in teachers' way of dealing with the situation Dolphin is in.

3.5. Goodnight Mister Tom

3.5.1. About the book

Goodnight Mister Tom by Michelle Magorian was first published 1981, and soon became a British children's books classic. When Booktrust.org in 2015 made a "list of the 100 best books for children from the last 100 years," *Goodnight Mister Tom* was high up in the 9-11-year-old category (Booktrust, 2015). *Goodnight Mister Tom* is Magorian's first and most famous publication.

3.5.2. Plot summary

In September 1939, a young boy named Willie Beech is evacuated from his home in London to Little Weirwold, a small village in the countryside. Here he is sent to live with Tom Oakley, an older, isolated and bad-tempered widower who for years has isolated himself from the local society. Willie arrives scared, starved, tiny for his age and filled with painful and big bruises and sores from his physically and emotionally abusive, domineering and God-fearing mother. "Mister Tom," as Willie calls his guardian, initially keeps distant and unattached from the boy, but soon realizes what he has been through, and turns out to be a loving and patient foster parent. Mister Tom helps Willie cope with his trauma, treats his wounds, helps him catch up in school and encourages him to start exploring his talents in art and acting. While living with Mister Tom, Willie is blossoming. He does well in school, which was unthinkable for him back in London, and makes friends, including fellow-evacuee Zach.

After some months in Little Weirwold, Willie's mother sends for him to come back to the city as she claims to be ill. After a sad and heart felt goodbye, Willie returns to London. When his mother finds out the details about his life in Little Weirwold, she becomes furious. It turns out that she gave birth to a baby girl while Willie was away. She is neglected and in bad health. After several incidents of physical and mental maltreatment over the next weeks, Willie's mother beats him and throws him in the cupboard under the stairs with his baby sister, chained to the piping. After a while Tom gets worried after not receiving a reply on his letters and decides to try to find Willie. He travels to London, and by the help of Willie's neighbor and a local policeman, they break down the door to the apartment and are met with a vile stench. They find Willie and the baby, who has died, chained, bruised and starved. They are rushed to the hospital, where Willie is heavily drugged to prevent him from screaming and disturbing the other children. Mister Tom is warned that Willie will be placed in a children's

home. In order to prevent this, Tom kidnaps him and takes him back home to Little Weirwold.

Back in the countryside, Willie spends a long time recovering. He blames himself for the death of his sister and struggles to get back to life. After seeing his favorite teacher breastfeed her baby, he finally understands that he was biologically unable to feed the baby, and comes to terms with her death. The authorities find Tom and inform him that Willie's mother has committed suicide. After debating Willie's future, they realize that he has found a good home with Tom, and let him adopt Willie.

3.5.3. Why This Book Was Chosen

William is the character in this thesis that experienced the most “types” of child maltreatment. He experienced physical and mental maltreatment, medical and educational neglect as well as general child neglect when living with his mother. After moving away from her, he is no longer disposed to any of that, and the book provides information about his way of dealing with the aftermath of the maltreatment. The contrast between his schooling in London and Little Weirwold, and his relationships with his teachers provide the book with an insight into how William's home life is affecting his schooling.

Wanting to include a book in which parental physical abuse plays an important part is also one of the reasons why the book is included in the primary literature. The fact that the book, unlike the two others, does not use humor in their way of portraying the topic, also provides the material with a different perspective. *Goodnight Mister Tom* is still relevant today, something that can be seen in that it was published in Chinese in February 2019, showing how the market for her book is still expanding (michellemagorian.com, 2019). It is also included in Penguin Books classics.

4. Analysis

The analysis will be divided into three different parts, one for each of the books in the primary literature. This is to structure this part of the thesis as comprehensively as possible. The Actantial Narrative Schema will be the base of the analysis to provide a clear and structured analysis of the different central aspects of all of the three books. The main goal for the analysis is to provide answers to the research question linked to each book. The next chapter, the discussion, will, on the other hand, provide more of a comparative aspect, where the central aspects of the thesis statement will be considered as well as a more thorough focus in the third focus question. The books chosen for this analysis are packed with exciting and important elements for this thesis. I will, however, due to the frames for the thesis, not be able to focus on all aspects. Therefore I have chosen to focus on what I consider to be the most important features in order to provide an answer to the focus questions.

4.1. *Matilda* by Roald Dahl

Matilda, the protagonist in *Matilda*, has some characteristics that make her stand out in between the other protagonists in the primary literature selection. With her unique smartness and the elements of magic, she brings in a different perspective on how to deal with the maltreatment she is experiencing in her own life. This does, however, not change the fact that Matilda is being subjected to child maltreatment, both at home and in school. The analysis will mainly deal with the maltreatment at home, as the school situation is so particular and extreme. Matilda's special abilities do nonetheless affect how she deals with it, and also how the relationships to her teachers are being formed. Her unique powers and Dahl's way of writing give the story a more extreme and humoristic look upon the topics discussed, without taking away the severity of the situations.

4.1.1. The Actantial Narrative Schema

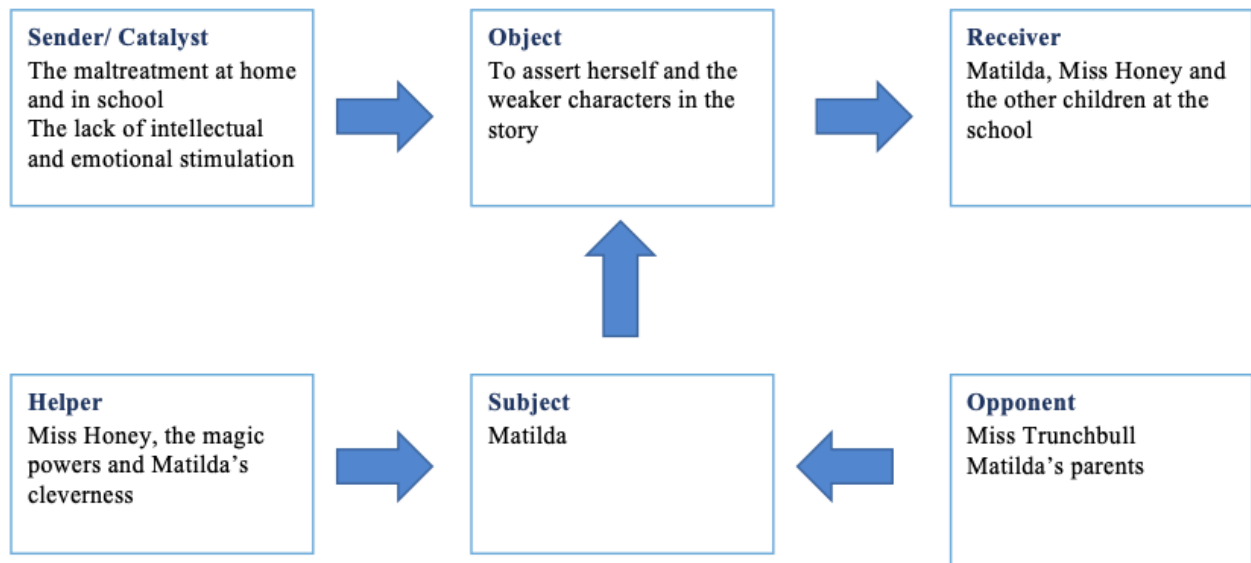


Figure 3: The Actantial Narrative Schema – *Matilda*

In order to get a clear picture of the rather complex function structure between the characters and aspects within the characters themselves, I have chosen to use The Actantial Narrative Schema. It is the book, and therefore the schema, with the fewest characters, and with the most non-human elements present, such as the magic powers and human characteristics. Like mentioned the schema previously has traditionally been used when analyzing fairytales and folktales, but the similarities between some of the features in this book and the typical features in these genres provides a smoother transition to the schema.

There are two major projects present in the story. One is the physiologically motivated project within Matilda, while the second project is the more practical project of Matilda helping Miss Honey get her freedom back. The other can be seen in a light where Miss Honey is functioning as the subject, and where Matilda is more of a helper or fairy godmother. Beauvais (2015) mentions this theory in her article. She argues that Matilda appears in Miss Honey's life and by using magic, is able to help her archive her biggest dream and raise her quality of life. In some ways, this can be linked to the fairy godmother in for example Cinderella, where the godmother comes into her terrible and poor life, and helps her escape the tyranny of the horrible stepmother. However, this is a project where Miss Honey is the subject. Since Matilda is the protagonist and the character that is in the child maltreatment situation, it would be more natural to create a schema where she is the subject for this thesis.

The two projects will therefore be summarized into the main project of Matilda asserting herself and the other weaker characters in the story, also including Miss Honey.

An element in the schema that is important for this book is the possibility for one element or person to be in more than one actant. Matilda is one of the characters that in this story fills the role of more than one actant. She is not only the subject, but also the receiver of the story, and parts of her person, like her cleverness and her magic abilities, are also seen as helpers. These two aspects might be seen as one, as the magic powers can be seen as a result of her intellectual abilities. This can be challenging when seeing the actants in relation to each other. It is, however, an important aspect to the schema in general, and this ability makes the schema able to adapt to stories like these.

The aspect of characters and character relations is the most central aspects to analyze in order to answer the thesis statement. The characters in *Matilda* are more or less static throughout the story, meaning that there is limited to no development in the character's features and the roles they play. The development in character relations is however crucial in most of the turning points throughout the story. There are some characters and character relations that are particularly interesting in this thesis. The characters that are the most central when answering the thesis statement are Matilda, her parents, and the two teacher characters; Miss Honey and Miss Trunchbull. The relations that I have considered to be most important to this thesis are between Matilda and her parents, Matilda and Miss Honey, the teacher characters and the parents and to a certain degree Matilda and Miss Trunchbull. I will also briefly touch upon the relationship between Matilda and the librarian Mrs. Phelps.

4.1.2. The subject and the maltreatment situation

There are several aspects in the book that needs to be addressed in order to grasp the scope of the maltreatment situation and the teacher's role. One of these aspects is the characters present in the maltreatment situation itself and the type and extent of the maltreatment. The protagonist and the biological parents are the most central figures here, and analyzing these characters will be a good backdrop in understanding the reason behind, and how the different characters react to, the situations of maltreatment.

Like mentioned previously Dahl has a specific humorous way of writing about the often gruesome characters and situations in his stories. This trait is clearly visible in his way of writing in *Matilda* and maybe especially in his character descriptions. While the protagonist and the “good” characters on her side are depicted as almost exclusively pure and good, the antagonists and the “bad” characters are depicted as wicked and do not show any signs of remorse and concern. Because of their extreme and exaggerated features, the reader is made to see them more like a caricature or a character from a fairytale, rather than a real person you should empathize with. There are still elements of seriousness in the portrayal of the challenging topics. These elements of Dahl’s writing have been criticized “for being too clear cut in classifying adults as either good or bad” (Pinsent, 2012, p. 87).

Dahl’s distinctive character descriptions are clear in the first introduction of the protagonist in *Matilda*. The reader is quickly introduced to Matilda’s uniqueness and extraordinary intelligence and the situation she is living in:

It is bad enough when parents treat *ordinary* children as though they were scabs and bunions, but it becomes somehow a lot worse when the child in question is *extraordinary*, and by that I mean sensitive and brilliant. Matilda was both of those things, but above all she was brilliant. (Dahl, 2016, p. 4)

This quote is a clear indication of not only Matilda’s uniqueness but also on the narrator’s views on children and childhood. There is an interesting distinction between *ordinary* and *extraordinary* children in the quote, creating a humorous implication about it being worse maltreating an “extraordinary” child than an “ordinary” child. Like Pinsent (2012) pointed out, Dahl’s own childhood experiences strongly affected his way of writing about children and childhood, often placing his protagonists in situations without adequate care and love. The humorous and extreme way of portraying childcare is further mentioned later in the book. As the plot in *Matilda* progresses, the maltreatment several on the characters are experiencing is seen as more of a humorous literary device. This is especially prominent when Miss Trunchbull is the one doing it in the school situation. Only when the maltreatment is affecting Matilda personally, it is something that is strongly frowned upon by the narrator.

The protagonist (subject) and the object

Matilda Wormwood is the protagonist of *Matilda* and is not like other children her age. The narrator spends a considerable amount of time in describing Matilda, making sure the reader I

aware of her uniqueness and her abilities. It is made clear she not only is far above average when it comes to her general development but also when it come to learning without anyone teaching her.

It is early clear to the reader that Matilda was born into the wrong family. Her desire to learn, brilliance and intellect are far from something she might have inherited from her cunning yet stupid father and neglecting mother. Nevertheless, Matilda does not let her parents' shortcoming ruin her abilities. Since she is unable to make her parents love her for whom she is, she uses her intelligence to get the education she deserves, punishing her parents as she goes.

When analyzing the milieu aspect of the characters, the family's financial status could be of interest. This could say something about the intentions behind the maltreatment, as poor economy could be seen as a factor for maltreatment (World Health Organization, 2016). Beauvais (2015) mentions that Dahl tends to use the class divide between characters as a tool to make the reader aware of the impact this could have in society also in real life. Matilda's parents appear to have about an average income, indicated by the fact that her dad owns his own company and the fact that her mother does not have to work and can go play bingo all day. They also appear to live in an average house and do not seem to be missing anything material. This is in contrast to many of the other children's books by Dahl, where the family's economy plays a part in why the familiar structures are the way they are. This also makes Matilda's parents unable to blame the way they are treating Matilda on any economic factors.

The aspect of Matilda's magic powers is something that separates this story from the others in the selection of primary literature. Her newfound telekinetic ability is, however, the only magic aspect of the story. This ability is crucial for the way she scares Miss Trunchbull into leaving the school and Miss Honey's life. Still, it plays a much smaller part in the story than it could have done. The ability is important in this situation, but it is still a minor part of Matilda's personality and her abilities. The magical part of her special abilities can be seen in two different ways. You could either see them as one of her unique abilities, in the same manner as her reading, or as an extreme extension of her intellectual abilities. In other words, that Matilda's superhuman brain not only gives her a significant advantage in reading and math but also gives her telekinetic powers. This makes the reader see this as something

amazing she can do, without making her into a magical “creature” that is only known for her magic abilities.

Dahl often uses the names of the characters as a part of their characteristics. Matilda is described mainly by only her first name. Matilda’s parents are, on the other hand, referred to by their surname; Wormwood. It can be assumed that this is also Matilda’s surname.

Wormwood is a bitter herb used in medicine. In smaller doses, it can have a medical effect, while in larger doses it can be toxic. This can be transferred to the characters. Matilda’s parents are older and bigger, and their way of acting can be seen as toxic. Matilda, on the other hand, is more of a healing power to the ones around her. Matilda is removed permanently from her family and placed into a new before she grows up. This could be a symbol of her not growing up to become as toxic as her parents.

The biological parent(s) and type and extent of the maltreatment

The parents’ role and their way of acting are central to the plot of in *Matilda*. The narrator set the story, and also the reader’s perception of the parents, of by saying “It’s a funny thing about mothers and fathers. Even when their own child is the most disgusting little blister you could ever imagine, they still think that he or she is wonderful” (2016, p. 1). Further the story goes on about how parents tend to see their children as wonders. On the fourth page of the book, Matilda and her parents are introduced, and the extent of the maltreatment soon becomes prominent.

But Mr and Mrs Wormwood were both so gormless and so wrapped up in their own silly little lives that they failed to notice anything unusual about their daughter. To tell the truth, I doubt they would have noticed had she crawled into the house with a broken leg. (p. 4)

By presenting the parents in this way, the reader is automatically introduced to their way of being and acting, and everything that is told about them later on is just building up under the first impression.

An interesting note regarding the intentions the parents seems to have behind the maltreatment is that there appears to be no trace of love, care and the child’s best interest in mind when it comes to the maltreatment situation in *Matilda*. In some books regarding this topic, the parent characters might have a different or just plain wrong view on what the best

for their children is, but there are rarely parents with so much dislike and carelessness towards their children than in *Matilda*. When introducing the parents, the narrator writes about how they saw Matilda as a “booger”, and that “Mr and Mrs Wormwood looked forward enormously to the time when they could pick their little daughter off and flick her away, preferably into the next country or even further than that” (p. 4). This strongly indicates the wish the parents have to get rid of their “troublesome” daughter.

There are several clear examples of maltreatment in *Matilda*, providing the story with a coherent and discussable topic and function of child maltreatment. There is never mentioned any instances of physical abuse by her parents in *Matilda*, as they rarely appear to be directly mean to her, but instead just neglect of her emotional needs. Mrs. Trunchbull appears to be the only character to physically abuse the children. However, the seriousness of the neglect and active mental maltreatment provides more than enough information for there to be a clear case of maltreatment. The only time there is mentioned direct anger towards Matilda is when she brings home a library book and her father gets so angry that he tears it apart (pp. 33 - 34). Apart from this the anger expressed by her father is mainly not directed towards her, mainly because he is unable to realize that she is the brain behind whatever is happening to him.

Matilda’s older brother, Michael, and his relationship with their parents, provides a more nuanced image of the maltreatment situation. He is seen as much more similar to his parents than Matilda, sharing their interest in material goods and watching television. This could be seen as the reason why he seems to be much more taken care of and loved by his parents. The parents seem to struggle to understand Matilda’s intellectual pursuits and values, something that appears to frustrate them. This could be one of the reasons why the parents love Michael more than Matilda, and why they are treating Matilda the way they are. However, the narrator mentions that Matilda was neglected already from she was a baby, long before her personality was present enough for her parents to dislike.

Looking at the dynamics between Matilda and her parents, the aspect of active mental maltreatment and neglect, including educational neglect are all present in the story (Fahrman, 1993). One of the reasons why I argue that there is an active aspect to the maltreatment is because of the parents’ ability to take care of Matilda’s brother in a good way. The fact that they seemingly have no problems with loving and caring for the brother, makes it seem like the way they are treating Matilda is a conscious choice rather than something happening due

to their mental health or other issues. Also, the economic status makes them unable to blame the maltreatment on external factors. Like mentioned previously, there are no signs of physical maltreatment, as they seem to supply Matilda with all she needs and is never physically harmful towards her. The obvious neglect situation is, however, the most present in the story. From an early age, it is told that Matilda was left alone for large parts of the day when her father went to work, and her mother played bingo. Matilda used most of this time walking to and staying at the library, without adult supervision, except the librarian. The fact that such a young child is left alone to do this without the parents even noticing shows a clear sign of neglect.

The aspect of educational neglect is apparent in the story. “Matilda was a little late in starting school. (...) Matilda’s parents, who weren’t very concerned one way or the other about their daughter’s education, had forgotten to make the proper arrangements in advance” (p. 60). The fact that Matilda has an older brother, who is in school, again indicates the parent carelessness towards Matilda.

Miss Trunchbull and her torturous ways of running the school, quickly turn her into the main antagonist of the story. By doing this, Dahl in a way let the parents’ maltreatment come second once Matilda starts school. Because she is faced with the horrible headmistress at school, her home situation is toned down. Also, the fact that there is a limited focus on Matilda’s home situation once she starts school minimizes the parents’ role. It is, however, still the maltreatment that is happening in the home situation that will be the main focus when it comes to the aspect of the maltreatment in this thesis. This is mainly because it makes the three books in the primary literature more comparable, and also because the focus towards the school situation could be challenging to analyze if the maltreatment was in fact primarily happening in school.

The protagonist’s way of coping

Many of the mischiefs Matilda performs on her parents is made to get back at them for the various situations they put her through. This is the only way she is able to get back at them, considering the fact that she is not only a small child, but also their daughter, relying on them for food and shelter. However, her cunning ways of getting back at them leaves her with some sort of advantage in the psychological power relation between them. Even if Matilda is aware

that she has to keep living with her abusive parents, she is able to comfort herself with the reassurance that she can stand up for herself without having to face the consequences as they never appear to figure out that she is the one behind the pranks.

The neglect and psychological abuse she goes through at home is central to her becoming who she is, and for the plot to develop. The fact that Matilda is fighting what is happening at home in such a clear and direct way makes the situation appear almost humorous. One of the only times Matilda is expressing sadness over her home situation is when she is talking to the librarian and telling her “She [her mother] doesn’t really care what I do” (p. 10). Apart from this Matilda appears to be untouched of the maltreatment that is happening at home, except for the occasional anger and revenge situations.

Foster home and foster parents

On the last page (p. 232) of the story Matilda’s parents sign her adoption papers and leaves her with Miss Honey as they drive away to run the country. The last sentence reads “Miss Honey was still hugging the tiny girl in her arms and neither of them said a word as they stood there watching the big black car tearing round the corner [...] and disappearing into the distance” (p. 232). Since this is where the story ends there are no mentions of how Matilda’s new life living with her new adoptive mother became. Still, the reader is left with enough clues to assume that they did live happily ever after. Something interesting here is the aspect of adoption in Nikolajeva’s concept of *in loco parentis* (2002). Nikolajeva identifies the teacher as a potential new carer figure. The fact that Miss Honey is the one adopting Matilda, permanently removing her from the maltreatment situations, makes her become a clear example of this theory.

4.1.3. School and teacher characters - role and function

The school environment plays a large and central part in the plot of *Matilda*. After Matilda starts school on page 60, most of the plot is developed around her school situation, either set at school or revolving around the school/teacher-oriented plot. The two most central teacher characters in this story are Miss Trunchbull and Miss Honey. While Miss Trunchbull is the headmistress at the school Matilda attends, Miss Honey is the class’s primary teacher. Miss Honey therefor spends the most time with Matilda and her classmates, while Miss Trunchbull only teaches the class one hour a week. As well as the two teachers, there is one other

character that goes under the category of teacher character; the librarian Mrs. Phelps. She is the first to discover Matilda's extraordinary gifts when Matilda first starts going to the library before attending school. Even though she is a minor character in the span of the book, she is playing a part in the development of Matilda, and her faith in grown-ups. She will therefore be included in this part of the analysis.



Figure 4: "Miss Trunchbull"
Matilda (Dahl, 2006, p. 78)



Figure 5: "Miss Honey"
Matilda (Dahl, 2016, p. 62)

Miss Trunchbull

The names of the teacher characters are, in true Dahl spirit, closely linked to their personalities. The name Trunchbull is made up of two words. The word "trunch" (a stake or a small post) has a quite neutral meaning, while "bull" could refer to a quite big and often seen as aggressive animal. Both her name and looks are representative of her personality. On page 77 she is depicted to look "more like an eccentric and rather bloodthirsty follower of the stag-hounds than the headmistress of a nice school for children." She is also described to be a former athlete, still having her muscular physique. "Her face, I'm afraid, was neither a thing of beauty. She has an obstinate chin, a cruel mouth and small arrogant eyes" (p. 77). Her physical characteristics are attributed to personality traits such as arrogant and cruel, connecting her inner and outer characteristics. Also, the illustrator, Quentin Blake, has played a part in depicting Trunchbull. The first illustration of the headmistress is on page 78, depicting her standing in her office (illustration 1). This illustration is more or less

representative for the way she is portrayed throughout the text. The only exception to this is when Trunchbull is smiling while she is throwing a girl across the field by her braids (p. 109) and a more evil looking grin while punishing a young boy for eating her cake (p. 116).

Miss Trunchbull is one of the main antagonists in the story, always working against the good. She is portrayed as a horrible person, both by the narrator and the other characters. The first time Miss Trunchbull is properly introduced to the reader, the book reads:

Now most head teachers are chosen because they possess a number of fine qualities. They understand children and they have children's best interests at heart. They are sympathetic. They are fair and they are deeply interested in education. Miss Trunchbull possessed none of these qualities and how she ever got her job was a mystery. (p. 76).

Already here the tone is set for Trunchbull. She is not once described by any positively loaded words. She is, on the other hand, described to be a "gigantic holy terror, a fierce tyrannical monster that frightened the life out of pupils and teachers alike" (p. 61). When first introducing Trunchbull, the narrator addresses the reader and writes;

Thank goodness we don't meet many people like her in this world, although they do exist and all of us are likely to come across at least one of them in a lifetime. If you ever do, you should behave as you would if you met an enraged rhinoceros out in the bush – climb up in the nearest tree and stay there until it has gone away (p. 61).

This quote conveys to the reader not only how Trunchbull is as a person, but it can also be linked to her name and looks. As the rhinoceros and a bull have some of the same traits that can be seen as a link to how she later is portrayed as a big and crass person.

The characters talk about and describe the headmistress to each other. "Before the first week of term was up, awesome tales about the Headmistress, Miss Trunchbull began to filter through to the newcomers" (p. 96). The first time Matilda is directly faced with the rumors about the headmistress is when an older girl in her school comes over at recess and tells her and her friend about the Trunchbull. By saying things like "She hates very small children" (p. 96), "[...] many don't survive" (p. 96) and "[...] she simply picked him up by one arm and flung him clear out of the open classroom window" (p. 104) she spreads the wicked stories about the headmistress to the younger pupils, and pass on the cautionary tales of the school.

Miss Trunchbull has a series of characteristics and one main function. The main function of Miss Trunchbull is to be the mean and awful antagonist. By being the antagonist in both Matilda and Miss Honey's storyline, it gives them something to fight together, leading to plot development. While she for most of the book is seen as mean, careless, controlling and manipulative, her more scared and conscious side comes forward at the end of the book. Until this point, she does not seem to care about anything other than her own wellbeing and seem to think of the people around her, both her family or her pupils, as something that is only in the way of her living her perfect life. Using the exaggerated character descriptions is classic to Dahl's writing, and the fact that the extreme malice towards everything makes her character appear humorous to the reader. The fact that everything she does is so extreme and exaggerated separates her from the reality the reader is living in and therefore loses some of her terror. Even if some kind of consciousness is presented at the end of the book, she is still not worried for anyone else but herself. She still does not care about her niece and her pupils but runs away simply to save herself. This makes it easier for the reader to not sympathize with her, but rather celebrate with the heroes in the story.

Miss Honey

Miss Honey is depicted as a sweet, caring, smart and loving teacher. Even her name helps build up under her personality. The word "honey" can be linked to several things, but the two main uses of the word are to refer to the sweet food substance made by bees or as a pet name or term of endearment. Just from her name, the associations are light and sweet, something that is mirrored in both her actions and appearance. She is said to be young, as she "could not have been more than twenty-three or twenty-four" (p. 60).

Further, the narrator describes her like this;

She had a lovely pale oval madonna face with blue eyes and her hair was light-brown. Her body was so slim and fragile one got the feeling that if she fell over she would smash into a thousand pieces, like a porcelain figure. (p. 60)

The narrator portrays Miss Honey not only as pretty but also fragile. As the story progresses, the reader learns more about Miss Honey. The fragile aspect of her can be linked to the way she was raised, leading to the way she is living today. Her whole life is dependent on Miss Trunchbull and has been since she was very young.

The fact that her face is likened to the word Madonna is interesting. This is a word with several meanings, but one of the most traditional and common uses is to link it to Virgin Mary, commonly seen as the mother of Jesus and a good and loving figure. Another possible reference is “a morally pure and chaste woman” (Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary, “Madonna,” 2019).

Quentin Blake illustrated Miss Honey according to Dahl's descriptions, creating a thin, beautiful and smart looking teacher figure. In several of Dahl's characters there appear to be a link between beauty and kindness and ugliness and meanness. This is especially evident in the teacher characters, but can also be seen in Matilda's parents and friends as the “good” characters are illustrated and described as cute or beautiful, while the “bad” characters often are more rough and big such as Miss Trunchbull.

Miss Honey is in many ways the polar opposite of Miss Trunchbull. Even if it turns out that her aunt, the headmistress, in fact raised her, it does not appear to have affected her personality or characteristics. Like Trunchbull she is described both by the narrator and the characters, especially from Matilda's point of view. The first time the reader is introduced to Miss Honey is the first day Matilda goes to school. Dahl introduces her by writing: “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 for being adored by every small children under her care” (pp. 60 - 61). What is interesting when it comes to this quote is the fact that she seldom smiles. Most people would link a warm and caring teacher to someone who smiles a lot. The fact that this is not something Miss Honey seems to do, it can be a sign of the hardship and pain she has been, and still is, going through. Another possible explanation for this is the fact that Miss Honey is so lovely and nice that she does not even need to smile for everybody to adore her.

Throughout the story, Matilda finds different ways to express her love and admiration for her teacher. Her first impression of her teacher is clearly presented when she makes up a limerick about her on the first day of school. The limerick reads:

“The thing we all ask about Jenny
Is, “Surely there cannot be many
Young girls in the place
With so lovely a face?”
The answer to that is, “*Not any!*” (p. 73)

Miss Honey has several characteristics, and they are presented as almost exclusively positive. The only characteristics that by the reader can be seen as unfavorable is the fact that she does not stand up to the headmistress in situations where the children are in danger. She appears to try a couple of times but quickly backs out when being corrected. This personality trait can, however, be seen in the light of, and explained by, her childhood growing up in an abusive home with Miss Trunchbull being the primary caregiver after her father died.

One could argue that Miss Honey has two primary functions in the plot development. Firstly she is the first to acknowledge Matilda’s abilities properly. By helping her develop, believing in her and fighting for her rights she builds a strong bond to Matilda. Also by inviting her home, she helps develop Matilda’s feeling of belonging and purpose. This leads to the second main function; indirectly giving Matilda the mission to get rid of Trunchbull and bringing order to their worlds again, leading to Matilda discovering her magical abilities.

Even if Miss Honey is a fantastic teacher to Matilda, her way of managing the class could be discussed. The narrator mentions several times that she seems to forget about the rest of the class as she gets interested in something Matilda is doing (pp. 64-65 & 75). She is also clearly treating Matilda differently by inviting her home and following her education closer than the other pupils. The reason for this can be linked to the uniqueness of both Matilda herself and the relationship between the characters. However, the reader is only let in on glimpses of the time Matilda is in school, so focusing on these situations is a natural narrative choice.

While Miss Honey’s physical traits that are described in the beginning of the story remains the same, her personality traits change with the plot. In the beginning, and throughout most parts of the story she is careful and scared to do something to upset the headmistress. However, her faith in Matilda’s abilities brings forward a bolder side, making her do things she did not previously do. After discovering the uniqueness of Matilda’s brilliance she goes straight to the headmistress’s office. “Normally Miss Honey was terrified of the Headmistress and kept well away from her, but at this moment she felt ready to take on anybody” (p. 76).

She also went to Matilda's parents early in the story to try to make them realize the amazing abilities of their daughter but ends up leaving disappointed and mad by their lack of understanding and commitments towards their daughter. As she opens more up to Matilda, she seems to grow more confident and strong. At the end of the book, she is able to stand up to Matilda's parents, as they are about to take her away and convince them that it is better for Matilda to stay with her.

The fact that Miss Trunchbull was the primary caregiver for Miss Honey when she was growing up is central to mention. The maltreatment Matilda is experiencing is perhaps something Miss Honey can relate to due to the maltreatment she experienced in her own childhood. The maltreatment is continuing even though Miss Honey now is a full-grown woman. In many stories from real life you hear about how abuse and maltreatment go through generations, and there is a tendency to abuse if you were abused yourself. This does, however, not appear to apply to Miss Honey, something that brings out her goodness even more.

Mrs. Phelps

Mrs. Phelps is the librarian at the local library and the first person to really discover Matilda's love for and abilities in reading when she is coming to the library before starting school. She is also the first to express concern regarding Matilda's home situation. However, Mrs. Phelps decides not to do anything about it, despite her rightful worry. This, and the fact that she is trying to tell Matilda to inform her parents about the fact that she spends so much time in the library indicates that she is worried, but does not do anything to fix it.

'Does your mother walk you down here every day and then take you home?'
[...] 'She doesn't know I come here.'
'But that's surely not right,' Mrs Phelps said. 'I think you'd better ask her.' (p. 10)

A good thing she does for Matilda is that she helps her develop her reading. Even if she keeps being confused by Matilda's intellect, she trusts in her abilities and helps to allow her to explore and learn through books.

School-home relations

Matilda's parents are mainly present in the book in the time before she starts attending school, while the majority of the story is set to her school life. In the story, there are three situations

where Matilda's parents and teachers meet. The first one is only referred to by Miss Trunchbull in a conversation between her and Miss Honey. Before Matilda starts school, Miss Trunchbull buys a car from her father. While being at the car dealership her father talks to the headmistress about how horrible Matilda is. This leads to her having a shallow and wrong impression of her before she starts school. When Miss Honey comes into Trunchbull's office after discovering Matilda's gift, the headmistress is unwilling to hear her out, and believes it all to be forged due to her previous conversation with Matilda's dad, a man she at the time thinks highly of because of a good deal on a car he gave her. The second meeting is between Miss Honey and Matilda's parents the same night she starts school. Miss Honey goes to Matilda's house after Matilda is in bed to talk to her parents about moving Matilda up some grades due to her intelligence and maturity. Matilda's parents refuse to believe and listen to her, and after a heated discussion where Matilda's parents fail to see their daughter's potential, Miss Honey leaves in anger. The third and last meeting is between Miss Honey and Mr. and Mrs. Wormwood the day they decide to leave the country after her father has been caught trading illegally. This is when Matilda briefly explains to her parents that she does not want to come with them and that Miss Honey can adopt her. The parents agree to this without further discussion.

Teachers' way of dealing with the maltreatment

Mrs. Phelps is, in fact, the only character to explicitly express worry for Matilda's home situation. Miss Honey does appear to notice the circumstances Matilda is living under, but despite her meeting her parents and seeing the way her parents are treating her with her own eyes, there is never a mention of her thinking about doing anything about it. It is made clear to the reader that the relationship between Miss Honey and Matilda is unique. The fact that a child character leans on an adult in order to get support and love is quite common in children's literature. What makes the relationship between these two characters stand out is however how both of them seem to benefit from the relationship in a quite equal way. Matilda gets the love, interest, and challenges she has been missing at home, while Miss Honey gets her economy and freedom back and a new friend to confide in. When Matilda is first visiting her at home, Miss Honey is telling her about her awful childhood and life so far with Miss Trunchbull.

‘Up to now,’ Miss Honey went on, ‘I have found it impossible to talk to anyone about my problems. I couldn’t face the embarrassment, and anyway I lack the courage. Any courage I had was knocked out of me when I was young. But now, all of a sudden I have a sort of desperate wish to tell everything to somebody. I know you are only a tiny girl, but there is some kind of magic in you somewhere. I’ve seen it with my own eyes.’ (p. 189)

The fact that the relationship between the two characters has a structure of Miss Honey trusting her problems with Matilda, could affect her way of dealing with the maltreatment situations Matilda is experiencing at home. Miss Honey appears to have enough problems in her own life, not to take in the full aspect of what is happening to Matilda. Considering that Miss Honey is leaning on Matilda as if she was a friend rather than a student makes them lose the professional distance between them as teachers and pupils. In a way, Miss Honey is leaving her strong and professional side behind and moves into a place where she is expecting Matilda to help her deal with what she is struggling with, rather than it being the other way around.

4.1.4. Summary of analysis

Seeing how the child maltreatment is presented in *Matilda*, which role the teachers are given, and how this is affected by the protagonist, the biological parents, the extent of the maltreatment and “the other adults” is central to later be able to conclude the thesis statement. In *Matilda*, there is no doubt about the presence and severity of the maltreatment happening. The people behind the maltreatment, the opponents, play a big part in the plot development, and the development and creation of character relations. Matilda’s parents, and their way of treating their daughter, are a clear example of active mental maltreatment and neglect.

The fact that the opponent category is made up of not only the parents but also a teacher character, is important to the plot. Miss Trunchbull is seen as an opponent with her way of torturing the people around her. Miss Honey does, on the other hand, fill different actants, both as helper and receiver. The two clear opposites in teacher character roles have a humorous effect on the book, making it less realistic. It still shows the outer points on the scale, clearly showing different possible teacher character roles.

How the teacher character’s role is affected by the protagonist, the biological parents, the extent of the maltreatment and “the other adults” will mainly be discussed in the discussion

chapter, comparing this story to the two other books in the primary literature. Most of the characters presented in the analysis does, however, play a part in how the teacher characters are presented and how the relationship between the protagonist and the teacher characters develop. The factors in and around Matilda all affect her perception of the world, and also of the people around her, including her teachers.

4.2. *The Illustrated Mum* by Jacqueline Wilson

The Illustrated Mum is perhaps the book in the primary literature with the most complex character relations. It is also the book with the most time of the plot spent focused on the family structure and the maltreatment situation. Also, the clear and discussed aspect of a parent struggling with mental health issues provides the reader with a different but rather common aspect of many real-life maltreatment situations. It is the book in the primary literature where the biological parents play the biggest role as large parts of the book revolves around situations where the parent is present, and where the maltreatment is discussed and seen in a nuanced and complex way.

4.2.1. The Actantial Narrative Schema

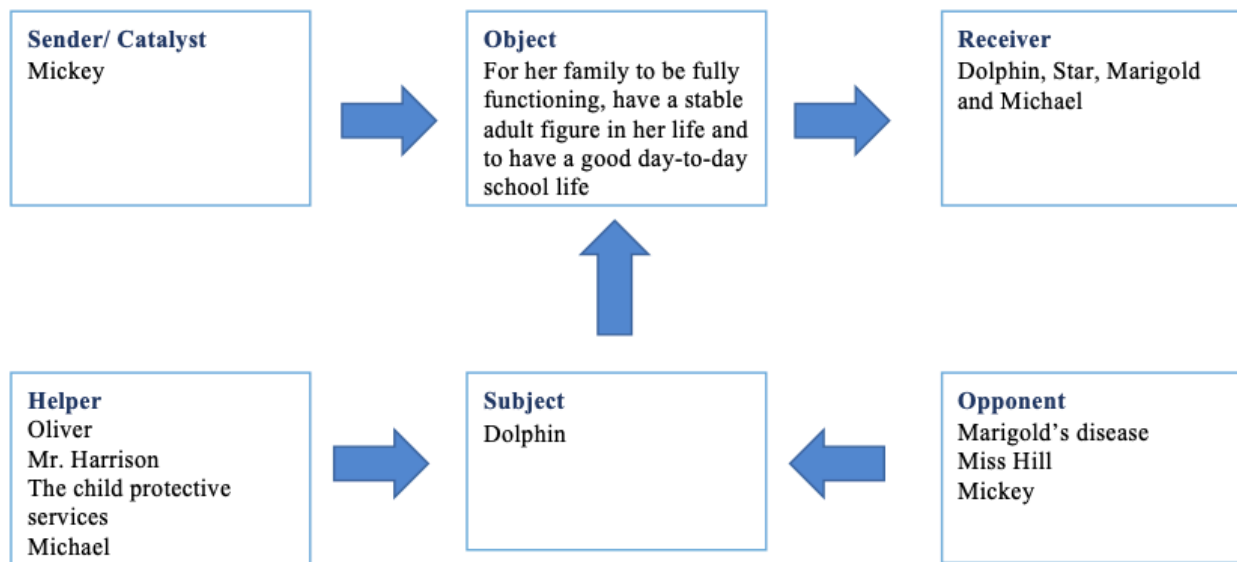


Figure 6: The Actantial Narrative Schema – *The Illustrated Mum*

Particularly challenging when placing the characters in this story is the character of Marigold. She as a character will be thoroughly analyzed later in this chapter, but to fully follow the analysis until that point, I would like to point out the fact that she is a complex character, filling different roles in the story. This means that different parts of her will be placed in different actants. Her mental health issues are placed in the opponent actant, while the rest of her is placed as receiver. This will be further discussed later on.

Another important aspect to mention is that Dolphin, the protagonist, also is the narrator in the story. This means that her views and opinions strongly influence both the roles and the descriptions of the characters and situations in the story.

One could argue that finding her father becomes an object for Dolphin as the story progresses. The reason why I have chosen not to include this is because of when this becomes prominent in the story. As Star meets her father, Dolphin's wish to meet her does not appear to be dominant. Instead, she wants the situation to go back to normal, without any father figures at all. The situation that in the end makes her set out to find her father is when the only choice is between finding him or go into foster care. This is the reason why I have chosen to see this as more of a side project, rather than a main project in the story.

4.2.2. The subject and presentation of the maltreatment situation

There are several aspects in the book that needs to be addressed in order to fully grasp the maltreatment situation and the teacher's role. One of these aspects is the characters present in the maltreatment situation itself. The protagonist and the biological parents are the most central figures here, and analyzing these characters will be an important backdrop in understanding the reason behind, and how the different characters react to, the situations of the maltreatment. Also looking into the types of the maltreatment, and the extent is central for this part of the analysis.

The protagonist (subject) and the object

The protagonist in *The Illustrated Mum* is ten-year-old Dolphin. Dolphin does not look or act like the other children in her class, always wearing her thorn, black dress, and having to deal with a mentally ill mother. Her life consists of there being a clear instance of child maltreatment at home, and severe bullying in school. Most of the story is set to the time Dolphin spends in her home situation and her way of dealing with the situations that occur with her mother and sister. As Dolphin is the narrator, there are limited direct definitions of her as a character. She does, however, describe some of the different parts of her looks and personality throughout the book. One of the main traits that she seems to focus on is her inability to properly read and write (see e.g. p.1, 7). This is something she mentions several times, and it seems to be something she is very self-conscious about. Even if there are few examples of direct definitions when it comes to Dolphin, the story is packed with examples of

indirect presentation. Her actions are most of the time revolved around taking care of her mother and trying to hide what is really happening at home. Her staying faithful to her mother, and not asking for help until she reaches a point when she no longer is able to deal with what is happening, says a lot about her perseverance and loving personality. In school and in other situations where her secret might come out she pretends to be tough, putting up a hard outer cover, but the reader is let underneath her shell, revealing her young and often immature thoughts and ways of dealing with her feelings. Her speech and thoughts, seen as a part of the narrative, also reveals the youth behind the tough facade she is trying to place towards anyone that might break down the fragile act that is going on within the walls of their home.

Because of the narration and the buildup of the plot Dolphin becomes a clear subject when applying the Narrative Actantial Schema to the story into. Dolphin is playing several roles in relation to the other characters. At times when Marigold is at her worst Dolphin has to step into a parent-role, pretending that Marigold is her daughter in order for them to get out of the setting they are in. The clearest example of this is when Marigold and Dolphin goes to search for Mickey. Marigold gets so frustrated with the situation that she ends up hitting Dolphin, a situation that will be further analyzed later on. However, Dolphin's way of dealing with it stands out when it comes to the roles she plays. She describes to the reader that her pretending to be the mom is a game they sometimes like to play. Even if the situation is described as a game, there is nothing fun and playful over the situation, and it appears to be more like a coping mechanism than something they do for enjoyment (p. 146 - 149). The fact that Dolphin has to play different roles in her own life, being a mother to her own mother and a normal child without any problems in school, leaves her confused and stressed. When she, in the end, is allowed to drop the masks she has been wearing the reader and the other characters are allowed the first real glimpse of the real Dolphin.

The fact that Dolphin is the narrator of the novel provides the reader with a unique insight into her situation. The fact that she is the one telling the reader about what is happening leaves the reader with a feeling of understanding of her, her feelings and why she is dealing with the situations the way she is. Like mentioned before Dolphin is always standing up for Marigold, defending her actions. To the people around her, this is something that she does simply because she does not know any better, and because she still is a young child. The reader is, however, informed more about her background and thoughts for doing what she is doing. As

the story progresses, Dolphin seem to get a clearer understanding of the severity of the situation Marigold is in. The fact that Star leaves her alone to deal with all the aspects of the situation she earlier has been sheltered from makes her realize that the situation is, in fact, more severe and more complicated than she earlier was able to understand. Being allowed the insight of this realization allows the reader to see the toughness and resilience that has been built up over time, and also the point where this breaks down and Dolphin is no longer able to control or handle the situation. The fact that the reader is allowed access to Dolphins thoughts and frustrations throughout this time makes for a deeper understanding of what being subjected to maltreatment could feel like. The inner struggle between the loyalty to her mother and the fright about what could potentially happen if she asks for help makes the character more real and relatable. However, the fact that Dolphin is the narrator also somehow limits the story. This is especially applied when it comes to the character descriptions and her way of seeing the situations she is in. As Dolphin is the one providing the reader with all of the information they are given about the other characters and the action in the story, the reader is forced to believe her and see her world through her eyes. This is also important when it comes to analyzing the teacher characters and the school situation that is presented in the book. As Dolphin sees the world through her eyes, and with her preconditions, it is important to look at the characters presented by her with a consciousness of this.

The structure of the Postmodern Metaplot is present in the story. Like defined before, this structure is defined by the protagonist abandoning or being abandoned by the caregiver, before creating a new home for themselves (Wilson, 2009). When Marigold is admitted to the mental hospital, Dolphin sets out to make a new home for herself while waiting for Marigold to be let back out. Her first attempt is trying to move in with Oliver, but when his mother does not allow this, her new solution is finding her dad. After finding him, and realizing that he is not going to take her in the way Mickey did with Star, she ends up in foster care. Unlike the horror stories Marigold has told about the foster care system, Dolphin quickly finds her place in the new home and is after a while able to let Star into her new home structure. All of this is done without ever giving up on the dream of being able to back to living with Marigold, meaning going back to her old home.

The aspect of foster homes and the child protective services is something that comes up several times throughout the story. It turns out that her mother left Marigold when she was young and she grew up in foster care. She tells her children about her childhood and does not

talk positively about this time in her life. It is clear to the reader that she has imprinted her experiences and feeling regarding this onto her children. This can also be seen as an example of *in loco parentis* (Nikolajeva, 2002) as Dolphin's foster mother becomes an (at least temporary) caregiver when Marigold is unable to take care of her children.

Dolphin's main dream/project is to have a fully functioning family, a stable and predictable adult figure in her life and have a good day-to-day school life. In a way, I would assume that this is the baseline of most children's life project.

The biological parent(s)

Marigold is not like the other mothers in Dolphin's class, neither look wise nor personality wise. First of all her looks are not typical for a mother of two. This is something both Marigold herself and her daughters is pointing out. Her hair is colored bright red, she is heavily tattooed, and wears far more colorful and revealing clothing than the other moms (e.g. pp. 8, 22)

In the beginning of the book, and also the introduction of Marigold, the narrator lets the reader in on the implication of there is something off with Marigold. During the opening scene in the book Marigold is crying over it being her birthday, about the fact that the things Dolphin drew on her birthday card is not typical "mumsie things" such as short skirts and her favorite pub (p. 5) and when listening to a CD from the same band that she met Star's father on a concert with. Also, other aspects of her behavior seem to be off. When she realizes that her daughters did not get her a birthday cake, after she specifically did ask them not to, she seems confused and does not remember telling them this (p. 5). Later that same morning when Star is out to get a birthday cake, Dolphin is left alone with Marigold. As Marigold starts telling Dolphin about parts of her childhood, she seems to go into a sort of trance. "I always got a bit scared when she talked like that, muttering fast, playing around with words" (p. 7). After some minutes Marigold seems to have forgotten about Star being out to get the cake and appears to get upset about Star being out of the house. This makes Dolphin upset with her mother, for the first time in the book, as she thinks that she is treating Star unfairly. This episode, and the way Dolphin is handling it trying to calm down her mother gives the reader further ideas about the special relationship between Marigold and her daughters. The fact that Dolphin's way of dealing with her getting upset at her mother is comforting and

trying to calm her down, instead of telling her that she is upset, shows the different relationship between them.

The relationship between Marigold and her daughters is different from the relationships the protagonists in the other stories have to their parents. While the other books provide a simple and flat image of the parent, *The Illustrated Mum* allows the reader in on more aspects of Marigold as a character, and by this the maltreatment situation. While Dolphin lives with her mother, both her and her sister's fathers are unknown for both the reader and the child characters for a big part of the story. The mother is therefore considered to be the primary caregiver in the story. However, when Dolphin first meets her father at the end of the book, he is portrayed as a much more appropriate caregiver as he is a part of a stable family structure with another woman and their two children. It turns out that he, in fact, knew that Marigold was pregnant, but she ended up leaving him before she gave birth. Because he no longer got to see Marigold, or meet his baby daughter, he created a family of his own after Marigold broke things off with him.

Marigold is perhaps the character that has most examples of direct definition (Lothe, 2000). Dolphin describes her several times in the book, providing the reader with a changing presentation of the character, depending on how Dolphin sees her in that moment. This is an engaging literary approach, letting the reader into her mind at different situations, allowing them to make up their mind about both the character and the situations going on, based on Dolphin's descriptions. While Dolphin often describes her in a positive light, there are often elements of problems or struggles lying underneath the surface.

Marigold's "weird" way of acting is a theme from the beginning of the book, without the fact that it is linked to her mental health problems is being addressed until later on. Marigold's way of acting is mentioned several times, and the fact that her acting "weird" is not always seen as a negative aspect of her personality. Dolphin loves the fact that her mother is not like the other parents, with her colorful personality and looks. The aspect of the mental health issues does, on the other hand, represent a different aspect of her person and something that is negative about her. It is later in the book revealed that Oliver's mother also is struggling with mental health issues. She is on the other hand not seen as "weird" or different by the other children or the teachers, as she is more "normal" in other aspects of her life. She lives in a

nice house and looks more like the other parents. This makes it easier to blend in with the other parents, even if her mental health issues seems to be serious enough to affect her child.

Type and extent of the maltreatment

There are early indications to the reader about something not being right in the relation between Marigold and her daughters. The first time the reader is introduced to the maltreatment situation is already in the first sentence of the story. “Marigold started going weird again on her birthday. Star remembered that birthdays were often bad times so we’d tried really hard” (p. 1). In the quote, there are no actual clear signs of maltreatment, but it presents to the reader that something is going on with Marigold and that this is a reoccurring situation. What is interesting here is that the reader not previously has been introduced to the characters, and have no way of knowing who neither Star, Marigold nor the protagonist is. The characters are soon introduced, piece-by-piece. The fact that the narrator does not call her “mum” still leaves room for wondering to the reader. On page five it is made clear to the reader that Marigold, in fact, is their mother. This sort of introduction makes the reader wonder, and the fact that it is not made clear from the beginning that she is their mother could be a foreshadowing to coming events.

Considering Fahrman’s (1993) theories on active and passive maltreatment, the child maltreatment Star and Dolphin is being subjected to can be considered passive. In fact, most of the cases of maltreatment Marigold is putting her daughters through in *The Illustrated Mum* is not done in the intention of harming them. It seems more like she is doing it because of her bipolar disorder and her alcohol addiction. There is only one mention of Marigold hitting Dolphin, and when this happens, Dolphin’s and Marigold’s reaction indicates that this is the first time this ever happening. Passive physical and mental maltreatment is explained by the absence of the necessary physical and mental follow up and care that the child requires at a certain age (Fahrman, 1993). The fact that Marigold sometimes leaves her children alone for a longer period of time, that she gets so drunk at home that her daughters needs to take care of her, her recklessness with money, the aspect of her bringing several strange men into the house where the children are living and many more aspects of her behavior shows signs of this being the most correct terminology to use when discussing the maltreatment.

There is one instance where Marigold physically hurts Dolphin. When searching for Mickey, Marigold gets so frustrated that she ends up slapping Dolphin in the face. After the slap, Marigold breaks down crying, and in order to try to fix the situation, she resorts to trying to get Dolphin to slap her back. “[...] I was so mean to you. Here, hit me back. Really slap my face. Go for it!” (p. 147). The quote shows Marigold’s immaturity in situations where she is no longer in control.

The research conducted by Joosen (2015) regarding the children’s reaction to the adult characters acting childish is central in the relationship between Marigold and her daughters. There are several parts of the book where Marigold is said to act like a child. At one point she even calls Dolphin “mum” as a part of what Dolphin considers to be a game (pp. 147 - 148). This happens when Marigold is having a breakdown when looking for Mickey, right after slapping Dolphin. Through first-person narration, Dolphin explains that this is a game she and her mother have been playing on and off for many years. The reader can, however, see that this is not an ordinary game to play to the extent they do. Dolphin does not only pretend like normal children would do in this game, but she ends up being responsible for her mothers’ and her own journey back to their apartment.

The protagonist’s way of coping

The child characters appear to have opposite reactions to their mother’s breakdowns. Star, the teenager, seems to be dealing with her mother’s emotions in a more distanced and angry way, whereas Dolphin seems more driven by emotions, and tend to get sad and confused by her mother’s emotional reactions. As the story progresses, these reactions seem clearer and clearer to the reader. It also turns out that the breakdowns and unpredictable reactions are something Star has been dealing with for a long time, while Dolphin has been able to stay sheltered to most of it due to her sister’s care. This is clear already in the opening scene with the birthday card, as Star is trying to get her mother to say the right things to Dolphin about her card and gifts, all while trying to save the situation and the day from becoming a disaster (pp. 4 - 7).

No matter what Marigold does, Dolphin seems to support and love her. Unlike Star, who seems to be close to her tolerance line when it comes to dealing with her mother, Dolphin appears to have unconditional love for her. Still, even Dolphin seems to be aware of the

missing motherly aspect of their relationship from the beginning. At one point, in the beginning, she even tells Marigold that she is like an older sister (p. 9). The fact that Dolphin has Star to step in and do most of the parental chores that Marigold is unable to do appears to shield Dolphin from some of the consequences of Marigold's neglect and mental illness. To Star, however, this places an extra burden on her shoulders. She is unable to live the life of a normal teenager, as she has the extra responsibility for her sister to deal with. This does appear to be the reason why her resentment towards her mother seems to grow throughout the story. Still, her love for her sister is so big that she is willing to keep doing it.

4.2.3. School and teacher characters – helper or opponent?

The teacher characters in *The Illustrated Mum* play opposite roles. There are two teacher characters present in the story; Miss Hill and Mr. Harrison. As seen in the Actantial Narrative Schema they are placed as opponent and helper, and the analysis of the teacher characters and their relationship to Dolphin will, therefore, be divided into three parts. First, the general aspects of her school life will be analyzed. Later the teacher characters will be presented, before their way of dealing with the maltreatment situation will be analyzed.

There is also another aspect of Dolphin's school life that is hugely influential for how she perceives her time in school; the bullying she is experiencing from the other pupils in her class. This is not directly related to the teacher's role in the maltreatment she is experiencing at home, but the teacher's reaction to the bullying says quite a lot about her abilities as a teacher and the relationship she can form with Dolphin.

School life

The classroom and school playground is not a safe and educational space for Dolphin. It is early made clear that Dolphin's home situation is not easy to deal with, and the initial experiences she has in school does not appear to help on her overall quality of life. There are however two different aspects of school as the plot develops. The first is in the beginning when Dolphin is alone, friendless and scared, and the other is after she befriends Oliver and they start spending the breaks in the library with Mr. Harrison. When the school situation first is introduced to the reader, the classroom and playground is the main setting. In the classroom, the reader is introduced to the class' primary teacher Miss Hill and some of the pupils in Dolphin's class, among them Oliver Morris (mockingly called Owly because of his

glasses), Ronnie Churley, Kayleigh Richards, and Yvonne Mason. Ronnie, Kayleigh and Yvonne are the main bullies in Dolphin's life. Ronnie is aggressive and is several times said to physically hurt Dolphin by hitting, pushing and pinching her both in the classroom and in between periods. He is seen as a tough and scary character that is being mean not only to Dolphin but also Oliver and other characters that are unable to fully stand up for themselves. He is however also depicted as being not very bright and seems to forget about being mean when other things are happening. The girls are however bullying Dolphin in a much more stereotypical "girly way." They are constantly saying mean things about her mother, her way of dressing and behaving, and their main goal always appears to be for Dolphin to start crying in order to humiliate her. The aspect of the bullying Dolphin is going through is an interesting element to add to the life she is living at home. In the other two books in the primary literature, the social aspect of school is seen as a social and good place to be, as they have friends and at least one teacher character that cares about their wellbeing. In *The Illustrated Mum*, this is not the case.

The other children in school have several times seen Marigold, and they are fully aware of the fact that Dolphin does not have an ordinary mother. They do however not know about the alcohol abuse, her inability to take care of her children or the other aspects of her mental health problems. This creates much room for the other children to make up their own image of Marigold, and how she really is. Dolphin never aspires to be like everyone else, but she is trying to go through her school days without there being a lot of trouble. She knows that the more her classmates know about her mother, the more they will talk. Therefore she is trying to stand up for her mother, but not pull more attention to her than necessary. The same thing happens at home. The few times Marigold is asking Dolphin about her school life she lies to her mother in order for her to stay out of this aspect of her life.

Dolphin has never been diagnosed with dyslexia, but her problems with reading and writing are mentioned several times. Just in the first chapter regarding Marigold's birthday, Dolphin mentions her problems several times. It appears to be something that she is thinking about, and that is bothering her, and she is using words like "hopeless" (p. 7) and "useless" (p. 1) to describe her abilities in writing. At the beginning of the story, Dolphin attributes her inability in writing to her being stupid. This does, however, change when Oliver tells her about dyslexia, and she for the first time realizes that there is a cause behind her problems. This seems to lighten her view on her abilities, and later in the story she uses the diagnosis as an

explanation for why she is struggling, no longer blaming it on her being stupid. “I’m not thick. It’s dyslexia. That’s the proper word for it” (p. 280). Even though Dolphin is never correctly diagnosed, getting a name on, and with that something to explain her struggles, seems to help her deal with her issues.

Miss Hill

Miss Hill is Dolphin’s primary teacher. It is clear to the reader that the descriptions of her are strongly affected by the narration. Dolphin does not like her teacher, due to several reasons. The main one appears to be that she sees herself as unfairly treated. The fact that she is bullied makes her act out in school. This again makes Miss Hill yell at her; something Dolphin finds unfair. The bullying itself appears to be either something her teacher does not notice or is unable to deal with. This makes Dolphin feel like she does not like or care about her. These elements make the relationship between Dolphin and her teacher complicated.

Mr. Harrison

Apart from Mrs. Dunstan, a teacher that is briefly mentioned in a few situations, Mr. Harrison is the only other teacher character in the plot. He is in many ways the opposite of Miss Hill. Dolphin makes the reader aware that he is teaching 3rd grade, and since she has been moving so much, she was never able to have him as her teacher. Mr. Harrison is working in the library during the dinner break. Dolphin realizes that the library probably is the only place where her bullies will not be able to find and hurt her, and she starts spending her long breaks there. This is also where she befriends Oliver. Mr. Harrison is in many ways a helper character. He does not only help create a safe and calm place for Dolphin and the other children to hide and spend time, but he is also the one that helps to start and develop the friendship between Dolphin and Oliver.

Mr. Hill has in many ways an interesting role in this story. As he is not Dolphin’s primary teacher, he does know her in the way Miss Hill is supposed to do. There are no indications to Dolphin’s home situation in the time she is spending in the library. Therefore Dolphin does not expect him to realize or do anything to help on this. There is however a clear indication that she has some issues in her school situation, as she prefers spending time in the library instead of going outside to eat and play with her classmates. Instead of talking to her about her problems, Mr. Hill appears to decide to let the library stay a safe free space where she can leave her problems outside. He befriends the children and allows them to be themselves.

The teacher's relation to the protagonist and the maltreatment situation

Dolphin is throughout the story trying to balance the life she is living in school and the life she is living at home. She is trying to hide her troubles at home from the school, and the other way around, in an attempt to make her life easier. She knows that if the school finds out about her home situation, they will contact the child protective services. On the other hand, she knows that Marigold might attempt to contact the school if she found out about Dolphin's problems there, again leading to the school system getting more suspicious about Marigold's abilities to take care of her children if they saw the state she was in.

There are two situations where Miss Hill directly addresses Dolphin's home situation. The first is on the first school day that is a part of the story, while the other is after Dolphin is placed into foster care. The narration makes the two approaches seem drastically different. Again it is important to mention that the narration is central for the perception of the intentions behind the interactions. Dolphin's way of interpreting the situation and intentions of Miss Hill is not the most objective. As she already is sure of the fact that her teacher dislikes her, she does not see this as a loving and friendly approach, but more intrusive and mean.

To fully understand Dolphin's reactions to Mrs. Hill's approach, we have to take a look upon how Star and Marigold talk about school and teachers. There does not appear to be any form of positive talk regarding school at home. Marigold states things like "I hated school. I was always in trouble" (p. 7), and Dolphin follows up with telling her mother she is the same. Still, there does not seem to be any form of support or reassuring from her mother. Later they go on talking about her Star's academic abilities. Star seems to be doing great in school, but socially and academically. However, when looking into the relationships she is having with her friends they appear to be not ideal. The people she is hanging out with appears to be pushing her into being a person she does not identify with, and someone she only is trying to be to fit into the group. Her time in school also appears to have flaws. She does not appear to trust in the teacher's ability to help them in the situation they are in. This is mainly linked to the girls' perception of the child protective services and the foster care system and the terror of them being sent away if their teachers were to find out what is really happening at home. As the girls walk to school a day when Marigold has gone missing, Star is telling Dolphin how important it is for her not to tell any teachers about what is happening at home.

“ [...] We’ll both go to school like normal. Only you won’t tell anyone that she’s gone missing, will you?’

‘Has she really . . . gone missing?’

‘I don’t know. But if you start blabbing about it, or even go round all sad and snivelly so that some nosy teacher starts giving you the third degree then I’m telling you, Dol, they’ll get the social workers in and we’ll both end up in care.’

‘No!’

‘Maybe not even together.’

‘Stop it.’

‘So keep your mouth shut and act like you haven’t got a care in the world. Don’t look like that. *Smile!*’” (pp. 33 - 34).

After hearing the horror stories about the foster homes Marigold was in growing up, Dolphin is petrified about being sent to one, and being separated from the one stable person in her life seems to be the final straw in her deciding not to tell anyone. This talk and the fright it brings with it does not provide the best starting point for a teacher to start helping a student she suspects is having trouble at home. This is important to keep in mind, as well as the power Dolphin has as the narrator when looking into Miss Hill’s questions.

The first time Miss Hill is addressing Dolphin’s home situation is during the same day when Marigold is missing. Dolphin is having a bad day, not being able to focus on the schoolwork, and after some of the girls in her class make fun of her mother she spits on their book. As punishment Miss Hill first asks her “‘What is the *matter* with you today?’” (p. 39), before sending her into the hall to wait until the class is over. Miss Hill later comes out to talk to her.

“She looked at me closely. ‘You look so worried. What is it?’

‘I’m worried about being late home, Miss Hill.’

She paused, her tongue feeling around her mouth like a goldfish swimming in a bowl.

‘Is everything all right at home?’ she asked.

‘Oh yes. Fine.’

‘Your mother . . .?’

‘She’s *fine*,’ I said, my voice loud and cheery, practically bursting into song.

Miss Hill didn’t seem convinced. But she made a little soothing gesture with her hand to show I was dismissed” (p. 40).

This is the first and only time Miss Hill directly asks Dolphin how she is. She is clearly worried about her, and especially about the situation regarding her mother. She does, however, not follow up on her worries. This is the only direct mention of a teacher asking the protagonist about their home situation in all of the primary literature. The narrator does not portray Miss Hill as a caring and aware teacher figure. Yet, it cannot be easy for Miss Hill to

get the full picture of what is going on, as Dolphin does whatever she can to cover up what is happening at home. It is clear to the reader that Miss Hill, in fact, is aware of something not being right, but does not seem to get any response when trying to address it with Dolphin. This is a big dilemma, both to Miss Hill and Dolphin. Dolphin strongly disliked Miss Hill as she thinks that she does not do enough, or anything at all, to stop the bullying. Dolphin also feels like she is being singled out in class, and that Miss Hill does not like her. On the other hand, Dolphin make herself unavailable for any form of relationship development.

Most of what Dolphin does in school is the opposite of what she is told to do. As the reader is made aware of, she does struggle a lot with reading and writing. There is no mention of this being discovered by her teacher, and no mentions of any help being provided. Most of the times Dolphin is told off for not doing what she is supposed to do the task include reading or writing. As this is a big problem for her, she seems to avoid any situation where her lack of knowledge or abilities can be discovered. This is especially the case when the other children in her class would have been able to discover what she considers to be her shortcomings. The teacher can, however, see this as simply not doing what she is supposed to do, and instead drawing or talking to the other pupils. As a teacher, it can be challenging to understand why the pupils are doing what they are doing, and in this situation it could look like it is merely a child that does not want to do what they are supposed to do. Seeing who starts fights like the one that ends with Dolphin spitting on her classmates can also be hard. To the teacher it probably looked like she was doing it unprovoked if she did not see the girls talking beforehand. Miss Hill does, however, prove that she has a suspicion that something is going on in Dolphin's life, and by talking more with, and not only to her, she could discover what is lying beneath her actions.

The second time Miss Hill addresses Dolphin's situations is the day after she has been placed in foster care.

“When it was playtime Miss Hill called me over to her desk.
‘How are you today, Dolphin?’ she asked, her voice all sweet and sticky like she’d swallowed a tin of golden syrup.
I stared at her.
‘You come and have a little chat with me if things are troubling you, dear.’
Dear????” (p. 269).

After a while Dolphin realizes that the teachers have been made aware of her situation and that this is the reason why they are acting differently. This appears to make Dolphin even more suspicious towards her teacher, and her “loving” approach does not lead her closer to earning Dolphin’s trust.

Unlike Miss Hill, Mr. Harrison does not appear to act differently after the news of Dolphin’s new living situation has been spread between the school staff. This is something Dolphin notices and appreciates. She does wonder if he knows, but the fact that he is the same old, stable and predictable character, is something she appreciates.

4.2.4. Summary of analysis

Seeing how the child maltreatment is presented in *The Illustrated Mum*, which role the teachers are given, and how this is affected by the protagonist, the biological parents, the extent of the maltreatment and “the other adults” is central to later be able to conclude the focus questions. In *The Illustrated Mum*, the maltreatment situation is complex, as the maltreatment happening appears to be passive. This is stated based on Marigold’s bipolar disorder and alcohol dependency making her act the way she is. Looking at the Actantial Narrative Schema this becomes clear, as it is only Marigold’s illness, not all of her, that is placed in the “opponent” actant.

Also, Miss Hill, Dolphin’s primary teacher, is placed as an opponent. Dolphin perceives her as careless and unfair, an impression based partly on her inability to deal with the bullying Dolphin is experiencing in school. The other teacher character, Mr. Harrison is on the other hand placed into the “helper” actant, in many ways playing the opposite role of Miss Hill. He creates a safe hiding spot for Dolphin and Oliver and stays stable and safe when other parts of the school situation are challenging.

How the teacher character’s role is affected by the protagonist, the biological parents, the extent of the maltreatment and “the other adults” will mainly be discussed in the discussion chapter, comparing this story to the two other books in the primary literature. However, most of the characters presented in the analysis play a part in this. The factors in and around Dolphin all affect her perception of the world, and also of the people around her, including her teachers.

4.3. *Goodnight Mister Tom* by Michelle Magorian

Goodnight Mister Tom has quite a lot more characters than in the other books (Magorian, 2014). It is also a longer book, with 357 pages without illustrations, and consists of not only a longer timespan but also more action. It is also the only story in the primary literature that has a male protagonist. Another aspect of the book that makes it stand out is the fact that the protagonist for most parts of the book no longer is in the maltreatment situation itself, but rather in a place of coming to terms with what has happened, and dealing with the aftermaths. This provides a more reflected aspect of the situation, both from the protagonist and the characters around him.

4.3.1. Character relations – the Narrative Actantial Schema

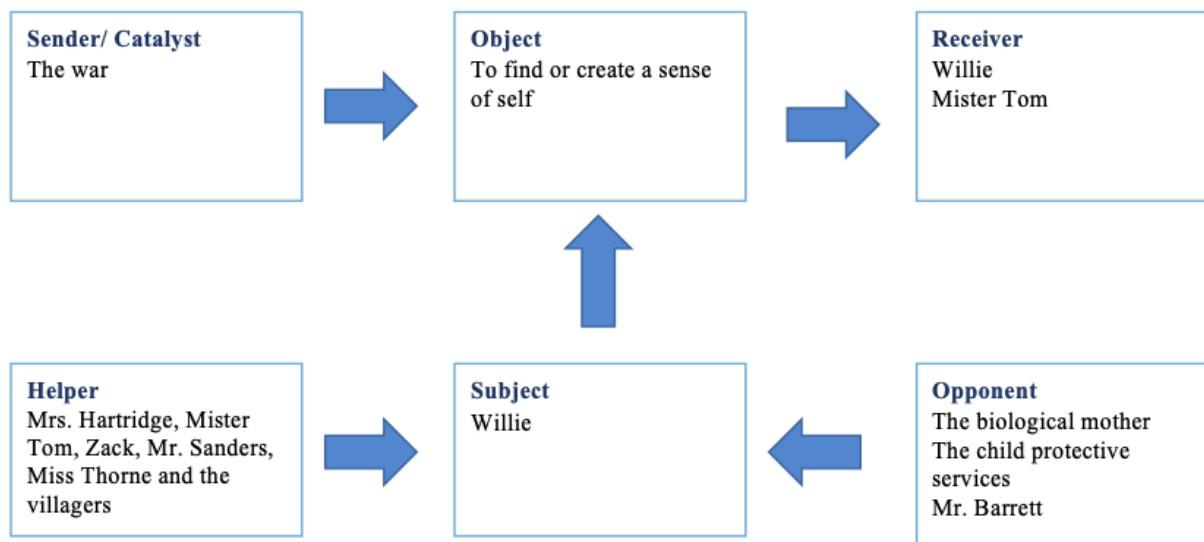


Figure 7: The Actantial Narrative Schema – *Goodnight Mister Tom*

Willie is the protagonist and seen as the subject in the main project. Willie stands out compared to the other protagonists, both in the fact that he is male, but also because he no longer is in the maltreatment situation itself for most of the plot. This leaves him in the situation of finding and creating a sense of self, and healing after years of being pushed and held down by his mother. The aspect of finding or creating a sense of self is therefore said to be the object/ main project of the story. The foster parent Mr. Oakley, or Mister Tom as Willie calls him, is the main helper in the story, and also becomes one of the receivers. Mister Tom is the safe home Willie is sent to when the war breaks out, and the man that ends up adopting him in the end, making both Willie's and his own living situation better. Willie's

mother is seen as the antagonist, together with the child protective services. While the child protective services only play a minor part in the story the mother is the most prominent opponent. There are more than one helper in the story, as Willie makes friends and what he considers to be an extended family between the other villagers and fellow evacuees. Also, his teachers play an important role in his new life and main project/ object.

4.3.2. The subject and presentation of the maltreatment situation

The protagonist (subject) and the object

William Beech is the protagonist in *Goodnight Mister Tom*. Throughout the plot there is a drastic change in his character, almost making him appear to be a different person in the end compared to the beginning. Since there are no illustrations in the novel, except for the cover page, the characterization of the looks of Willie is based solely on text. Throughout the story, there are many descriptions of Willie, both based on his looks and his ways of being and acting. The descriptions come from several characters and points of view as there is a third person omniscient narrator, making them appear more credible.

Willie's looks appear to have a strong connection to how he feels inside. In the beginning of the story, when he recently came out of the extreme maltreatment situation at home, he is described as [...] thin and sickly-looking, pale with a limp sandy hair and dull grey eyes" (p. 2). After some time with love and care, he eventually starts growing and does not only develop psychologically but also physically. He does not only get more confident and happy, but he is also gaining weight, getting some color in his face and brighter hair. Willie is several times said to be small for his age. The last sentence of the book provides a kind of closure to this; Willie turning to Tom and saying "'Dad,' repeated Will, in a surprised tone, 'I'm growing!'" (p. 358)

The physical changes in Willie are interesting enough, but the psychological and social changes are perhaps the most visible and dominate. It is clear that the abuse, both physical and physiological that his mother has put him through had affected him deeply. The first time Willie is left alone in Mr. Tom's cottage, on the first day, his way of acting and thinking allows the reader the first real look into his state of mind.

He hugged himself tightly and rocked backwards and forwards on the stool. 'I must be good,' he whispered urgently, 'I must be good,' and he rubbed a sore spot on his arm. He was such a bad boy, he knew that. Mum said she was kinder to him than most mothers. She only gave his soft beatings. He shuddered. He was dreading the moment when Mr Oakley would discover how wicked he was. He was stronger looking than Mum. (pp. 6-7)

As Mister Tom by this time has only been good to him, this quote is quite fascinating. Willie's mother has been beating him for probably all his life, so to him there is not even a possibility that the beating stop as he moves in with Mr. Tom. His mother has for years been telling him how wicked and sinful he is, so much that he has started to believe it himself. He is therefore scared for the first time this will shine through, and Mr. Tom will truly understand how bad of a boy he really is. As the story progresses the reader is however shown and told more about his way of being, and it is clear that he, in fact, is not even close to being a wicked child.

Throughout the story, Willie is comparing the life he used to live to the one he is currently living. By looking at these comparisons, the reader can construct an image of the horrible conditions he used to live under. Every time he is experiencing something new to him he imagines how his mother would have reacted to the situation. In the beginning, Willie is basing his reactions and actions on these thoughts, while they towards the end only seem more like simple and curious thoughts that pop into his mind. An example of these thoughts in the beginning of the story is when Tom is asking him to help build a shelter in the yard on a Sunday. As they are working and Willie gets dirty he imagines how mad his mother would get for not only getting his clothes dirty, but also for working on a Sunday. In the beginning, almost everything Willie does he seems to be compared to his old life, but as he becomes more used to his new life, this happens less and less frequently.

The relationship between Tom and Willie is in constant development, but already from the first day, the reader is made aware of the safety and comfort that Willie is welcomed into, even if this is something neither Willie nor Tom is fully aware of at the time. The insecurity between the characters, does, however, turn out to be a great starting point as it gives both of them the time and space they need to figure out the dynamics of their relationship. During the first chapters of the book, Willie is scared and worried about almost everything, as that is how his mother has raised him. Tom's predictability and secureness allows Willie to figure out the rules and possibilities of his new life at his own pace. The grumpy and cold man that the

villagers first see when they see Tom is slowly disappearing as the newfound loving and caring side is discovered, both by Willie and Tom himself. Even if Willie appears to be terrified and worried the first weeks, his feelings towards Tom come forward later in the story. The first time Willie has his friends over to play in his room, Tom brings them some drinks and snacks, and as he leaves the children start talking. "He's a real decent sort, Will," said Zack. 'You're awfully lucky being landed on someone like him.' Willie smiled. He'd known that since that first bewildering day" (p. 164).

Throughout the story Willie is called by three different versions of his name; Will, Willie, and William. The changes in his name often seem to mark changes in Willie's life and way of being. Willie is his mother's name for him, and this is the name that is used at the beginning of the book, both by the narrator and the characters. To Willie, this name is what he has been called for all of his life, and what he identifies with. Most of the grown-up characters refer to him as William all throughout the book. When Willie meets Zack, he insists on calling him Will. "' [...] He told me he was called Willie, but I thought that was a jolly awful thing to do to anyone. Willie just cries out for ridicule, don't you think?'" (p. 90). As the story progresses more and more people start calling him Will, and after he is being rescued from his mother's apartment, even the narrator and Mr. Tom start calling him Will. The change in his name becomes a symbol of the change that is happening in him, and of the fact that he is leaving the life he had with his mother behind. Also interesting regarding the usage of names is that the narrator uses different names for the characters depending on the situations. Just like Willie's name is adapted, Mrs. Hartridge turns into Annie as she quits teaching and Willie is visiting her after she had the baby. This could be because she then goes from being an authoritative teacher figure and turns into a more of a friend to Willie. Willie does, however, continue to address the other adult characters by their last names.

For consistency, I will call William Willie and Annie Hartridge Mrs. Hartridge.

The biological parent(s)

Willie's biological mother is one of the characters with least time present in the plot; still, her character plays a vital role in both the plot and character developments. Willie's mother is most central at the beginning of the book, as Willie keeps referring to and thinking about her, and at the time he is sent back to London to live with her. These referrals and Willie's

thoughts and reflections about her are the primary sources of information the reader is given. Willie does however not talk fondly about her, and miss her, like the other evacuees. Most of the times he is thinking about her at the beginning of the book she is functioning as a sort of conscience, telling him how to behave. It is clear to the reader that she has been giving him explicit instructions on how to act and what to do. It is also clear to the readers that the way she has been treating him is far from something that should be accepted. As the story progresses, the reader is allowed to get the other character's reactions to the maltreatment, and like the reader, they do not approve of the treatment.

There are several mentions throughout the book of Willie's mother telling him about different things that are considered a sin, and leaving him confused and scared. By setting all of these "rules" she is setting Willie up to fail, as there is no way he is able to follow all of them and therefore leaving him to sin. This mindset is present and plays a big part in Willie's life for the first weeks in the village. He is thought to believe that he is being wicked for doing almost everything. Normal everyday activities like asking questions, wearing the color red and sleeping in a bed are to him considered a sin, and this makes adapting to his new life extremely hard. The fact that the actions Willie considers to be a sin are entirely normal to Tom makes this even harder. Still, Tom's patience and stable and predictable actions help Willie understand the new aspects of his new life.

The reason why Willie's mother is the way she is, and why she is putting her children through what she is doing, is discussed in the book. She uses her religion and the bible as an excuse and claims to be doing what she is doing to help Willie become the best person possible removing him from potential sinful situations. All the rules present in her life she claims are there due to what is considered a sin in the bible. The beating she is performing is claimed to be to help Willie live a good and Christian life. However, blaming all of the maltreatment on her religious beliefs is a bit far fetched. At the end of the book Willie is told that his mother committed suicide. When questioning this, Tom replies with "[...] She was ill. She couldn't cope, see" (p. 319), indicating that she, in fact, was struggling with what assumedly was mental health issues. Also, the fact that she was able to lock her son and infant daughter in a cupboard and leave them there before going away for days or weeks gives a clear indication of this. Still, there is no explicit mention of a diagnosis, leaving the reader to wonder.

The first time the reader is directly introduced to Willie's mother is when she sends for him to come home. When this happens, Willie appears to have forgotten most about her, except the way she made him feel and the admonitions she sent him away with. There is nothing about him being sent home that seems to bring out positive feelings, unlike the stories that had been told about the other children going home. At the train when he is asked about his mother by a young soldier, he does not remember what she looks like, but still seems to have a strong negative feeling towards her. He seems worried about seeing her again, but the reassuring words Tom left him with seems to be what is making him face it head held high. When thinking about his mother at the train, he is trying to imagine her. "He began to fantasize around her, only her face was very vague. She became a mixture of Mrs Fletcher [a local lady] and Mrs Hartridge" (p. 207). The reason for this can be discussed, but this could be due to the loving and sometimes motherly feeling and actions the two women have expressed toward him during his stay. To him, the mix of them has become the closest thing to a loving and caring mother figure he perhaps ever had. For a boy that has only been away for about six months he seems to remember little about his mother's looks. He has however proven over the past months to remember most of her admonitions by his ways of reflecting to his old life. As he leaves the train and sees his mother again for the first time in months the aspect of recognition, mainly from his mother's side is clear.

'Mum!' he cried. 'Mum!'
'Go away,' she said sternly. 'You won't get no money from me.'
'Mum,' he repeated, 'it's me.' She glanced down and was about to tell him to clear off when she recognized him. Yes. It was Willie but he had altered so much. She had been looking for a thin little boy dressed in grey. Here stood an upright, well-fleshed boy in sturdy ankle boots, thick woollen socks, a green rolled up jersey, and a navy-blue coat and balaclava. His hair stuck out in a shiny mass above his forehead and his cheeks were round and pink. It was a great shock to her" (p. 210).

This is the first reaction Willies mother has to him when he first sees her at the platform as she is picking him up from the train. She later apologizes for not recognizing him and blames it on him changing. This is an indication of how she is used to seeing him, and what she was expecting him to look like upon returning. The mother is however not the only one that is surprised by the changes in the other. Willie describes his mother when first seeing her after six months. "She was very pale, almost yellow in colour and her lips were so blue that it seemed as if every ounce of blood had been drained from them. The lines by her thin mouth curved downwards" (p. 210). This is a similar explanation to how Willie was described when

first coming to Little Weirwold as “[...] thin and sickly-looking, pale with a limp sandy hair and dull grey eyes” (p. 2).

Type and extent of the maltreatment

Goodnight Mister Tom depicts a clear case of active/ passive physical maltreatment, active/ passive mental maltreatment and medical neglect (Fahrman, 1993). The fact that there are instances of both physical and mental maltreatment is clear, but if it is active or passive could be discussed. Because of the alleged mental health issues, the aspect of passive maltreatment needs to be considered. Still, the duration of the maltreatment situation and the reasoning she provides to why she is acting the way she is makes the case a bit unclear. What is for sure is the aspect of medical abuse. Leaving your children beaten and broken down, without food and locked to a pipe, depriving them of the medical attention they need supplies sufficient proof of medical abuse.

The fright and concern Willie is brought into Mister Tom's life with is an apparent reaction to the life he has been living with his mother. The fact that the plot starts as Willie is placed into Tom's life means that the reader is left to make up an idea of how his previous life has been, parallel to the discoveries Tom makes.

The fact that Willie is struggling with the aftermath of what he experienced while living with his mother is prominent in the plot. After all, the life he lived with her is the only life he knew, and her way of reacting to things he said and did was the norm when he first arrived at Mister Tom's. A clear example of this is a situation that happens one of the first days with Willie living with Tom. Willie is standing in the living room after Tom caught him trying to scare away the dog with a stick. Willie is sure he is about to get punished with a beating from Tom, and as he is standing there, this is the only thing on Willie's mind. While Tom only wants to talk to him and get him to worry less about the situation and the dog, Willie goes into a mode of self-defense by shutting the world out and locking himself in. As Tom starts poking around the fire with a poker, Willie can only see the burning hot fire poker that he is sure is going to become his punishment, and he ends up passing out on the floor (pp. 11-13). Tom never had the intention of scaring the boy or hurting him, and he has that far in the story never shown any signs of wanting to hurt Willie. Still, the fear of physical punishment has had such

a strong effect on Willie's life that he is unable to see this. This is a clear indication of how he has been treated at home, with physical punishment as a part of his everyday life.

At one point during the first week of Willie living with Tom, there is a situation that indicates to the reader another aspect of Willie's "old life," both in school and at home. As Willie learned how to close a gate to a nearby field, Tom simply tells him "Good" (p. 41), something that leaves Willie stunned as he "had never been praised by anyone ever" (p. 41). The fact that no one has ever praised a nine-year-old boy tells the reader a great deal about how his life has been. Another situation that shows aspects of the maltreatment is when Zach, Willie's best friend tells him that he likes him and wants to hang out with him. "No one had ever said that they liked him. He'd always accepted that no one did. Even his mum said that she only liked him when he was quiet and still. For her to like him he had to make himself invisible" (p. 85).

In the pages when Willie is first returning home to his mother, there are too many examples of the maltreatment to mention. The main incident is of course when she beats him until he passes out and locks him in a cupboard under the stairs with his baby sister with only a bottle of milk for the baby (pp. 240 – 241). Other than that there are smaller incidents like when she hits him in the face for asking her if he should carry her bags from the train station and when she is yelling and accusing him of lying again and again. The time she locks him under the stairs with his sister is not the first time. Willie's first night back he wakes up under the stairs and immediately seems to recognize the place and the feeling of lying there, naked and beaten.

Mister Tom – foster parent, helper and in loco parentis

Tom Oakley is the foster father of Willie. The last name stands from "oak," the name of a type of tree. In the story, there is a large oak tree in the front yard of the cot Willie, and Tom is living in. As the story progresses, the reader is made aware of the fact that Tom's late wife and son are buried under the tree. It is therefore central when he is standing in the kitchen window looking at the tree and thinking about them as he thinks about the life he lived with them, and how their deaths have affected the life he now is living with Willie.

The first time Tom is introduced his appearance is described.

Tom was well into his sixties, a healthy, robust, stockily-built man with a head of thick white hair. Although he was of average height, in Willie's eyes he was a towering giant with skin like coarse, wrinkled brown paper and a voice like thunder. (p. 2).

Throughout the book there are several mentions of Tom's personality, but his physical appearance is seldom mentioned. It is interesting to note that Willie on the penultimate page again comments on Tom's appearance. "[...] Will noticed now how old and vulnerable Tom looked. It unnerved him at first, for he had always thought of him as strong" (p. 357). The contrast between the two quotes is remarkable. What is interesting here is that even if the quotes are directly linked to Tom's looks, they are most likely closer linked to Willie's development than to the direct looks of the older man. Most likely the physical changes in Tom have been minimal over the last year, but the boy's way of seeing him changes drastically. This is linked to Willie's development, which is discussed throughout the entire book. This can again be linked to the effect the maltreatment had on Willie, and how much it helped him, both physically and mentally, getting to live with a loving and caring father figure. The finishing sentence in the book linked to him growing (p. 358) is a clear indication of this. The fact that Willie quickly became so dependent on Mister Tom, and the physical and mental care and help he was able to provide, made Mr. Tom step up to the challenge and embraces this new dependency. To Willie, he increasingly becomes a stable and safe haven, and someone he could count on in all aspects of his life. As Willie grows, not only physically, but also grows into a more confident and self-dependent child, his need for Mr. Tom's help decreases. He is still dependent on his love and care, but he becomes increasingly more secure in his own life and his other relations. Comparing the version of Willie that first came into Tom's life and the version of Willie that is coming home on the last day they appear to be completely different children. If you again compare the versions to Tom, there is an interesting point of discussion. As Willie changes, he appears to see Tom in different ways and compared to him, but physically and mentally the difference between them seems to shrink. However, it is not Tom that has been changing, but Willie.

The way Tom is dealing with the physical signs of the maltreatment Willie has been through tells a lot about him as a person. Several times over the first days Willie stays with Tom, Tom notices bruises and sores on the boy's body.

One of his socks slid halfway down his leg revealing a large multicoloured bruise on his shin and a swollen red sore beside. 'That's a nasty ole thing,' Tom said, pointing to it. 'What give you that?' Willie paled and pulled up the sock quickly. 'Best drink that afore it gits cold,' said Tom, sensing that the subject needed to be changed. (p. 6).

He helps him heal them but does not comment on them more than this first time. Even if he does not comment on them to Willie, he keeps them in mind, and they help him build an image of the way Willie was treated at home. This again helps him deal with Willie, and he takes it into consideration in the way he talks to and treats the boy in the beginning. These are traits showing the sympathetic and caring side of Tom.

When he first is introduced as this big, direct and grumpy old man, the reader might get an idea that Willie's life with him will not be the best, but it does not take long for the narrator to convince the reader about his good intentions and his caring, yet rough, personality. It does, however, take a bit longer to convince Willie of the same thing. As the story progresses the reader, and Willie, is made aware of the reason why he is acting the way he is. It turns out that as a young man of only twenty years he lost his beloved wife and son during childbirth. After this tragic incident, he was no longer able to be a part of the social community the way he used to be. As the years passed, he turned into a loner preferring his own and the dog's company, and the other villagers just accepted this. At the time Willie arrives it seems like the villagers have forgotten all about how he used to be, and have just accepted the way he is living his life. Therefore, the villagers get surprised, at the same level as Tom gets surprised by himself, as he becomes a bigger and bigger, and more and more active part of the community as his time with Willie progresses. At one point during the war, he decides to go to a town meeting and surprises himself and the others attending equally as he volunteers to do the fire watch. After he sees how kind and warm the other villagers act towards him as he does this, he fully discovers for the first time how isolated and distanced he has made himself over the years. Linked to The Actantial Narrative Schema, this can be seen as a second project. While Tom in the main project is Willie's helper, these roles can in some ways be flipped in this situation. Without either of them noticing, the presence of Willie is helping Tom create a better life for himself, under cover of him helping Willie. Not only does he slowly get back into the social aspects of the community, but he also makes small but potentially significant changes to his life like building a bomb shelter in his yard and start carrying a gas mask. All of this is done under cover of him doing it for the child, but as time passes, he slowly realizes that it is also helping himself.

The idea of *in loco parentis* is present here as Tom takes on two different caregiver roles towards Willie (Nikolajeva, 2002). In the beginning, he is forced into the role of caregiver because of Willie's mother's inability to keep him at home due to the war situation that is happening in London. At this time of the story Tom is only seen as a temporary caregiver, and this is something he keeps telling himself. To Tom, this first appears to be something good, as he is struggling with the changes that are happening in his life. However, over time he grows more and more fond of the boy, and as time progresses, he struggles more and more with keeping the distance. When he rescues/ kidnaps Willie, and after a while is told that he can adopt him, the relationship between them develops. Not only does Tom no longer have to keep the distance he has been trying, and mostly failing, to uphold. Also, Willie appears to be more calm and relaxed in the relationship, making it final by starting to refer to Tom as dad.

The story is also consistent with the Postmodern Metaplot (Wilson & Short, 2012). Willie is no longer able to live with his mother and leaves her behind in order to go out and create a new home for himself. He is later able to sincerely invite both Mr. Tom and other adults into his life, and by doing this genuinely living his life in the new home situation.

4.3.3. School and teacher characters - role and function

Willie's school situation and the character linked to this is important to his development. It is in this situation that he gets to know one of the primary helpers to his main project of the story. Mrs. Hartridge is one of the first characters the reader and Willie are introduced to in the book. At that point, Willie is comparing everything he sees and hears about his new school to the school he was attending back home. Right after running into his teacher, Willie starts thinking about his old school.

He'd forgotten all about school. He thought of Mr Barrett, his form master in London. He spent all day yelling and shouting at everyone and rapping knuckles. He dreaded school normally. Mrs Hartridge didn't seem like that at all. He gave a sigh of relief and rubbed his chest. That was one ordeal he didn't think would be too terrifying to face. (p. 9)

This is the first time the reader is made aware of the fact that it might not only have been his home life that has been a problem back in London. The way he portrays school, not only in this paragraph, gives the reader an idea of how bad it has been. Something interesting here is

the fact that he mentions that the teacher at his old school treated everyone poorly, not only him. Still, Mr. Barrett's ways of acting, clearly affected Willie's perception of school, teachers, and his own abilities. Also the aspect of to the social aspects of his school life is discussed. Willie had several nicknames linked to him being a wimp, and it is clear to the reader that his classmates did not treat him nicely. The fact that the other children made fun of him for not being a part of the games and getting his hands and clothes dirty was due to the beating he would receive at home if he did so. It does, however, bring a light into the story the first time he meets his teacher. Just by meeting her, he starts hoping that school life here will not be as bad as at home. This brings a positive outlook into his life, and from this point, until he starts school, this appears to be something he is looking forward to.

There is nevertheless something linked to his school situation that appears to worry Willie; his inability to read. This is introduced to the reader, and Tom, when the two of them are writing a letter to Willie's mother to let her know that they arrived safely. When Tom asks Willie to sign the card, he realizes that he is unable to both read and write. This comes as a surprise to Tom, and he follows up; “ ‘About this here schoolin’, didn’t yer teacher help you?’ ‘Yeh, but...’ He hesitated. ‘E didn’t like me (...)’” (p. 38). Later in the same conversation, Tom hands Willie a box full of paints. “ ‘(...) You paint?’ Willie’s face fell. He longed to paint. ‘Neh, ‘cos I can’t read...’ ‘The ones that can read and write gits the paint, that it?’ ‘Yeh’” (p. 38). He later mentions several times how his old school used not letting the children do arts and crafts as a punishment for not being able to do other tasks. Willie, being illiterate, was therefore never allowed to paint, something he longed to do. Again, the old school situation seems to affect his perception of his self-worth.

Mrs. Annie Hartridge

Mrs. Hartridge is one of the central figures in Willie's life. She is one of the first people Willie meets at his new home as she walks by with her fiancée his first day there. Willie quickly grows fond of her, and she is the catalyst behind several of the things he decides to do throughout the story. One of the aspects of Willie's development she is the reason behind is his willingness to learn how to read and write. As Willie discovers that she will be the teacher of the class with the children who already know this, he sets his mind to learn as quick as possible to move up to her class. Her encouragement and care for him are central to this quick development. She is also able to see the abilities that he has within painting, and to help develop them.

Mrs. Hartridge is mostly described through Willie's eyes. The second time Willie sees Mrs. Hartridge is the first time he attends church. "Mrs Hartridge and her uniformed husband entered. Willie gazed at her, quite spellbound. She was beautiful, he thought, so plump and fair, standing in the sunlight, her eyes creased with laughter" (p. 73). She is throughout the story described to be beautiful, loving and appear to truly care about her pupils.

When Willie first starts attending Mrs. Hartridge's class (p. 183) the reader gets an idea of how she is as a teacher. His first day in her class the reader is allowed in and gets a clear image of how she is acting towards him and the other pupils. She is portrayed as a loving and caring character already from the beginning of the story, and these characteristics are present also here. As she is testing the pupil's knowledge on their multiplication tables, she is encouraging and positive even when some of the pupils do not know what they are supposed to know, and later adapts the content of the class to each child. This also comes up when one of Willie's friends wants to try out for "grad school" even if she is a girl. Mrs. Hartridge supports her in her goals, and helps her in all the ways she needs to reach her goals. As Willie is new to the class, he is behind on some of the learning. "'Don't look so worried, William,' said Mrs Hartridge as she went over the nouns. 'It's only your first day. If you're stuck and you need help, don't be afraid to ask. That's what I'm here for'" (p. 190). Seeing this in relation to his previous school experiences provides the reader with a clear view of the contrast in his schooling experiences.

Minor teacher characters

There are several teacher characters present in *Goodnight Mister Tom*. Most of them have a helper role in the plot. Their importance and how significant a role they are playing is different from character to character. Due to the nature of the thesis statement I still consider it to be important to mention the most central of the minor teacher characters briefly. Their role linked to Willie's main project will also be mentioned.

Miss Emilia Thorne is the librarian in Little Weirwold, and as the story progresses, one of the characters helping Willie with his reading and writing. She is also the one who is responsible for the school play, where Willie discovers his hidden talent for acting. After a while, she also starts teaching at the school. Miss Thorne is first introduced to both the reader and Willie

when Mister Tom leaves Willie in the library, as he has to run some errands. “A tall, thin angular woman in her thirties sat behind it [the counter], her long legs stretching out from under it. She wore spectacles and had a fine auburn hair that was swept back untidily into a bun” (p. 61). She helps Willie find books to look at, and by the time Tom returns she is helping Willie with the words.

Geoffrey Sanderton is one of the minor characters in the story, but his appearance is still worth to mention. The fact that he gives Willie private lessons in painting and that he, in the end, decides to start teaching at the local school has made it so that I have decided to place him as a teacher character. Willie first meets Geoffrey in the woods as Willie and his friends are exploring the “haunted cot” Geoffrey turns out to be living in. During the first meeting, Geoffrey and Willie realize that they have a common interest in painting, and Geoffrey offers to give him private lessons. This goes on for a while, but it is first after Willie’s best friend; Zack is killed in a bombing in London Geoffrey helps Willie emotionally. During a painting class, he tells Willie about himself losing his best friend due to the war, and it is not before realizing that he will never forget his friend he was able to start living with it. This story helps Willie start to appreciate what he had with Zack instead of trying to undermine it and forget about it. This also gives him a newfound strength and confidence and helps him escape from the role he has been given even since he first arrived from his abusive mother. He is no longer the scared and submissive boy that arrived at Little Weirwold.

Mrs. Black is yet another person that starts working in the school and therefore will be considered as a teacher- character. She is said to be “a quietly spoken old lady who had been retired for seven years” (p. 88). Willie is first placed in her class, and even if he quickly grows fond of her, he is constantly longing to be in Mrs. Hartridge’s class. This is manifested in his way of working towards his goal. He is purposefully working on his reading and writing both before and after school. When he first realizes that he also needs to learn the numbers and basic math before attending her class his morale drops momentarily but is soon lifted. In the beginning, the aspect of learning seems to be directly linked to his wishes of moving up a class. However, as he gets into the learning, he seems to start appreciating the learning itself. School that used to be somewhere he dreaded to be, soon turns into a place of peace, and where he feels like he is mastering what the others are doing.

The last teacher character present is Willie's old teacher back in London, Mr. Barrett. Even though he only is directly present in the plot through a comment made by Willie, his ways of acting clearly affected Willie's view of school, teachers, and his own abilities.

Teachers' way of dealing with the maltreatment

The teacher characters present in the story all seem to have their own function, but the only one that is directly linked to helping Willie deal with the aftermaths of the maltreatment he has suffered is Mrs. Hartridge. Mrs. Hartridge is an vital helper figure in Willie's life, as she is his initial motivation to start learning and doing well in school. However, the perhaps most important aspect of their relationship is happening outside of school. The element of the maltreatment that is influencing Willie the most is the death of his baby sister. When he is locked under the stairs with his sister, she dies after a short period of time, while he survives long enough to be found. When he is found he is sitting with the dead baby in his arms and an empty bottle of milk lying next to them. It is stated by the paramedics that arrives at the scene that the baby is dead, but it takes weeks before Willie realizes that the baby he had been fighting to keep alive did not make it.

A while after returning to the village Willie decides to visit his teacher. She has by that time had a baby, and while this stuns Willie at first, he soon turns interested in the small, moving child. Before this point, the aspect of babies and breastfeeding has been mentioned twice between Willie and his friends. The first time is when Zack mentions that he was breastfed in the theatre dressing rooms (p. 136). When hearing the word breastfeed Willie blushes and tells his friend that it is swearing. The second time is when Zack and Willie are talking about the new hospital for mothers and babies that just got set up in the village and Zack tells Willie about how babies are made. For the first time, Willie realizes that his sister was not a gift from God and that his mother must not only have lied to him but also must have had sex with a man.

After Willie realizing how a baby is fed, he starts thinking about the abilities that he would have needed in order to keep his sister alive. Tom keeps reassuring him that there was nothing he could have done, and that "Baby needs milk. You couldn't give her that [...]" (p. 278). It is, however, not until the visit with Mrs. Hartridge Willie truly understands the depth of this. He is sitting in the garden with his teacher having a conversation, but not about the difficult

and painful aspects of their lives. There is a mutual understanding and respect between the two. “Sometimes in the middle of a conversation they would stop suddenly and look at each other with understanding” (p. 283). Still, the most crucial part of her helping him cope does not happen until there is a knock on the door and she has to get up to open. She stands up and hands the baby to Willie before walking away. “She walked briskly away not daring to glance back at him. She had no idea whether she was doing the right thing or not. Instinctively she wanted Will to know what it was like to hold a warm, live child” (p. 283). After the initial shock, he soon grows comfortable with the baby. The happiness is however short-lived as the baby soon starts crying. After desperately trying to find a bottle for the baby Mrs. Hartridge returns and, to Willie’s amazement, unbuttons her blouse and starts nursing the baby. As Willie is walking home, he is reflecting on what he has just seen.

“As they walked home Will felt suddenly lighter. Tom had been right. He couldn’t have given Trudy [his baby sister] what she had needed. It wasn’t his fault that she had died. He was still saddened by her death but the awful responsibility that has weighed so heavily on him had now been lifted” (p. 284).

This is a turning point in Willie’s life. After realizing that he had not been responsible for his sister’s death, he can let go of the nightmare he had been living in since the horrible incident at his mother’s apartment. The fact that Mrs. Hartridge trusted her baby with Willie and let him experience the love and care a mother is supposed to provide their newborn babies helped him understand that his mother was the one doing something wrong.

School-home relations

The aspect of school – home relations is almost completely absent in the book. Unlike the protagonists in the two other books, Willie’s time spent at school is more limited. Because the story is set during the Second World War, the schooling is affected by the ongoing war. The pupils have shorter and fewer school days than what is normal today. Willie goes to the same school as both the local children and the evacuees, and the room is therefore taking up most of the day. This means that the children are not able to go to school full time. Also, as the timeframe of the book only is for about a year, and large parts of the plot are set to the summer holiday and other breaks and weekends, meaning there is not much time spent in the classroom during the book. However, there is a clear connection between what is happening at school and what is happening at home. All the times Willie is at school, he tends to practice what he is learning at school at home, and Mister Tom is the one who is helping him most of

the time. He is the one that starts teaching him the letters and keeps following up what he is learning. It appears to be Willie who is keeping him up to speed on what is happening at school, and Willie's teachers and Mister Tom do not appear to have anything to do with each other. At least not something regarding Willie. As they all live in a small community there are examples of times when Mister Tom is helping Mrs. Hartridge before and after her having the baby, but nothing concerning the education of Willie.

4.3.4. Summary of analysis

Seeing how the child maltreatment is presented in *Goodnight Mister Tom*, which role the teachers are given, and how this is affected by the protagonist, the biological parents, the extent of the maltreatment and "the other adults" is central to later be able to conclude the focus questions. The maltreatment situation in *Goodnight Mister Tom* is the clearest to the reader among the three books. Willie's mother is clearly putting Willie through both physical and mental maltreatment. However, if the maltreatment is active or passive is up for discussion, as the mother's mental health is unconcluded. The fact that Willie is removed from the situation itself for most of the plot is a central aspect of plot and character development and relations. This fact leads to Willie's way of dealing with, and other characters help regarding, the aftermath of the maltreatment is in focus.

There are several teacher characters present in the plot, but Mrs. Hartridge is the teacher character that is most directly linked to dealing with the maltreatment. She meets Willie with a loving approach, focusing on his growth and educational development. The teacher characters present all have a clear "helper" role, placing them into the "helper" actant.

How the teacher character's role is affected by the protagonist, the biological parents, the extent of the maltreatment and "the other adults" will mainly be discussed in the discussion chapter, comparing this story to the two other books in the primary literature. What is important to mention, based on the analysis, before discussing this, is where in the maltreatment situation the protagonist/ subject is. Willie's situation stands out as he is already removed from the maltreatment itself, creating a difference in the expectations to the teacher characters and the other characters in the plot.

5. Discussion

To recap, the thesis statement for this thesis is “Which roles does the teacher character(s) play in the representation of child maltreatment in *Matilda* by Roald Dahl, *Goodnight Mister Tom* by Michelle Magorian and *The Illustrated Mum* by Jacqueline Wilson?” The analysis has provided a presentation and an analysis of the characters, maltreatment situations and the teachers’ role in these situations in the three books. This leaves the discussion to mainly be focused on the third research question; How is the teacher character’s role affected by the protagonist, the biological parents, the extent of the maltreatment and “the other adults”? The discussion will contain four subchapters, one for each book, and ultimately a comparative discussion of some of the central aspects of the focus questions.

5.1. *Matilda*

Matilda (Dahl, 2016) is the book in the primary literature with the most prominent “good” and “bad” teacher characters. It is also the book with the most humorous, extreme and exaggerated character descriptions in general, leaving no doubt about the character’s roles and functions. Miss Trunchbull, with her extreme ways, quickly becomes a clear opponent. The maltreatment she is exposing all the children in school to, as well as Miss Honey, appears to make the maltreatment Matilda is experiencing at home seem less terrible. She therefore appears to take on the role of the main antagonist, who the protagonist and helpers fight against. Miss Trunchbull is in contact with Matilda’s parents once. The parents create an unreal image of Matilda’s abilities and personality, something that affects Miss Trunchbull’s perception of and actions towards Matilda. Apart from this, Miss Trunchbull appears to be unfazed by the external factors in her life. Matilda’s abilities do not appear to impress or bother her until she no longer realizes that Matilda is the one performing them, believing it is the ghost of her late brother instead. The maltreatment Matilda is experiencing does not appear to affect her, even after Miss Honey expresses her concerns about Matilda’s parents.

Miss Honey is in many ways the opposite of Miss Trunchbull, also in her way of dealing with Matilda and her home situation. While Miss Trunchbull’s role and place in the Actantial Narrative Schema is simple and consistent, Miss Honey’s placement is more complex being both a helper and receiver. Miss Honey sees that Matilda’s parents are careless and neglectful towards their daughter’s education. After trying to convince them about her abilities, and that it would be better for her to move up a class, without getting any response, she realize the

situation Matilda is living in. To compensate for this, she creates a safe and loving environment in school, filled with mental challenges, love and interest. In return she gains a friend and a confidante. In the end she even adopts Matilda, permanently removing her from the maltreatment situation.

The home situation in *Matilda* is, in many ways, unique in the way Matilda is handling it. There is clear evidence of there being serious neglect, as well as active mental maltreatment. Matilda is dealing with it by pulling pranks on her parents, making herself feel more powerful and in charge of the situation. This has a strong connection to the expectations to the teacher characters in the story. As Matilda is able to deal with the maltreatment on a day-to-day basis, the expectations to the teachers change. The expectations are less focused on them helping her deal with the relationship with her parents, and more focused on them creating a safe and nurturing environment for her to grow in.

5.2. *Goodnight Mister Tom*

The teacher roles and the expectations to the teachers stands out in *Goodnight Mister Tom* (Magorian, 2014) mainly due to the maltreatment situation. The fact that Willie is no longer in the maltreatment situation itself, but rather dealing with the aftermath, appears to have a strong influence on the character's expectations to the teachers. The teacher characters in the story also stand out from the two other books, as they are more realistic and lifelike in their ways of acting and being.

Goodnight Mister Tom is the book with the most teacher characters present in the plot, but as Mrs. Hartridge is the most present character in dealing with the maltreatment situation, the discussion will mainly focus on her role in the plot. It is early clear that Willie and Mrs. Hartridge has a special bond. Mrs. Hartridge seems to start to understand that there is something special about Willie when he first starts attending school, and fully realizes Willies potential when he first is moved into her class.

The fact that Willie does not need any help getting out of, or dealing with, a current maltreatment situation, the expectations to Mrs. Hartridge are different from the expectations in the other books. She is expected to care for and encourage Willie in his development, but her main function is as an educator, which means helping Willie develop in reading, writing

and arts. It is not until she steps out of her professional role, and Willie is visiting her at home, that she is able to help him on a more emotional level. Her letting him hold her baby and getting to see her breastfeed, becomes a turning point in Willie's emotional development.

It does not appear to be any particular contact between Mr. Tom and Mrs. Hartridge when it comes to Willie's education. In the same way there is never any direct talk between Willie and Mrs. Hartridge about what he has been through with his mother. It is clear to the reader that she is aware of what has happened, but she does not try to talk to him about it. Instead she allows him to deal with the situation in his own way, and leaves the main parts of dealing with the aftermath of the maltreatment situation to the people in his home life.

5.3. *The Illustrated Mum*

In *The Illustrated Mum* (Wilson, 2012) Dolphin is living in a home where her mother is unable to properly take care of her and her sister. Still, Dolphin loves her mother, and is scared of being taken away from her mother and get placed in a foster home if anyone finds out about the situation at home. Whenever the school situation or anything regarding school is discussed at home, the conversation appears to have a negative tone. This is also the case when teachers are mentioned. Dolphin is told not to say anything to her teachers about what is really happening at home, and how it only will make the situation worse. The fact that this is Dolphin's attitude towards Miss Hill appears to have strong affect on their relationship. It also affects how much of an opportunity the Miss Hill is given to act.

Another part of Dolphin's life that appears to affect her relationship with Miss Hill is her social life at school. There are several examples in the book of other pupils bullying or teasing Dolphin. Several of these instances are happening in the classroom with the Miss Hill present. Dolphin is aware of this, and the fact that she experiencing her teacher seeing what is happening without doing anything about it affects her trust in Miss Hill's ability to deal with her problems in general.

The biological parents and the extent of the maltreatment also appear to affect the role Miss Hill is given. Dolphin is living in a maltreatment situation, but it is unclear how much Miss Hill knows about the situation. There are signs of this in what is going on at home when Dolphin is at school. She is showing up wearing an old, dirty dress, acting out and is both

distant and unfocused in class. *The Illustrated Mum* is the only book where the teacher directly asks the protagonist about the home situation, and appears to have a feeling about something not being right. These questions are, however, perceived as an attack by Dolphin, as she is told not to tell her teacher about what is going on at home.

There are some characters in the “other adults” category present in the story, affecting the teacher’s role. Towards the end of the story, Dolphin is living in a foster home with a loving and caring foster mother. Once she is sent to this home, where her needs are taken care of, the expectations to the teacher appear to change. Dolphin is no longer stressed about her figuring out about her living situation, but is more shocked about her teacher’s changed approach to her when she learns what has happened. The fact that Miss Hill all of a sudden has a sweeter approach to her appears to make Dolphin even more wary of her intentions.

The fact that Dolphin is the narrator of the story affects her way of portraying her teacher. While she only is talking about a mean and careless teacher figure that does not care about her and her life, the reader can be left wondering about the true intentions of Miss Hill. There is an expectation of Miss Hill to discovering and doing something about the situation Dolphin is living in, but Dolphin does not let her. Miss Hill does ask her about how things are at home, but Dolphin consistently lies and tells her that everything is all right. This leaves her with little facts to work with, even if she appears to have a feeling about something not being right. This could lead to wondering about if she was told what was happening, would she have done more?

The other teacher character; Mr. Harrison appears to have a completely different set of expectations to relate to, both from Dolphin and the reader. As he is not the class’s primary teacher, he is not expected to know of and deal with the maltreatment situation in the same way. He is on the other hand expected to be a safe space for Dolphin to escape to when other aspects of her life is hard. He is therefore not seen as a bad teacher, even if he neither is dealing with the maltreatment situation Dolphin is in.

5.4. Comparison

The presence and extent of the maltreatment situation appear to have a strong connection to the teacher character's role. It appears to be an expectation to the teacher to deal with the worst aspect of the protagonist's life first. In *Matilda* this appears to be her home situation and what is going on with Miss Trunchbull. In *The Illustrated Mum* the bullying in school appears to be the worst at the beginning of the story, but as the plot progresses, so does Marigold's situation. This makes the situation around her mother take over most of Dolphin's focus. In *Goodnight Mister Tom* the maltreatment is something Mr. Tom and the other people around Willie is helping him deal with at home. This means that the educational aspect of Willie's life, and the fact that he is educationally so far behind the others at this point, can be the main focus in school. If Dolphin's teacher would have focused mainly on the educational parts of her schooling during this period it would not correspond with the expectations to her in that situation, and it would make her appear like a bad teacher based on the fact that she is unable to provide Dolphin with what she needed at that time. When Willie's teacher, on the other hand, does just this, it makes her appear like a great teacher, as this is what Willie needed just there and then.

The milieu around the teachers and the school appear to affect their way of, and ability to, help. In *Goodnight Mister Tom*, the fact that the characters are living in a small village affects how Mrs. Hartridge is able to help him. As Little Weirwold is a small village, the teachers and the pupils are linked to each other also outside of school. It is not until Willie is visiting her at home after she had her baby that she is able to help him deal with his emotional problems. In a way, this can be linked to the bond between Matilda and Miss Honey. There are no mentions of the size of the town/village Matilda lives in, but there are some indications that it is not a major city. Miss Honey invites Matilda to her home, just like Willie is welcomed into the home of Mrs. Hartridge. The fact that the teachers invite their pupils home creates a stronger emotional bond between them, as the teachers no longer are in their "teacher role," but rather a caring adult figure.

How the teacher is functioning in the general classroom situation tends to indicate how they would typically be as a teacher, without focusing on the specific maltreatment situation. Even if Miss Honey can be seen as a "dream teacher", being every pupil's favorite, there are some situations in the book that shows that she seems to treat the pupils quite differently, and she seems to have obvious favorite pupils. Her making the step to adopt Matilda supports this

theory. Mrs. Hartridge, on the other hand, seems to be a more impartial teacher to her pupils. Even though she is Willie's favorite teacher, and she seems to like him as well, she does not let this affect the attention she gives any of her other pupils. She is several times mentioned to help other pupils individually with whatever they are struggling with at the time. Therefore, she seems to be the best teacher possible to all of her pupils. Miss Honey, on the other hand seems to only focus on Matilda's powers and uniqueness. She is even said to have forgotten about the other children in the classroom in some of the situations in the story. Unlike the primary teachers in the two other books Miss Hill in *The Illustrated Mum* does not appear to be anyone's favorite teacher, especially not Dolphin's.

How "the other adults" seem to deal with the maltreatment situation is also an important factor in which role the teachers are given. The "other adult" is present in all of the books in the form of a foster or adoptive parent. These characters are seen as loving and caring, and once the protagonists are placed in the custody of these characters, their living conditions appear to improve. Looking at the Actantial Narrative Schemas, these characters function as helpers, but often also as receivers. In *Goodnight Mister Tom* the "other adult" in the form of Mr. Tom, is a central and important character all through the story. He is the main helper and a safe haven for Willie. In *The Illustrated Mum* and *Matilda*, the foster/adoptive parent does not appear in this role until the end of the story and helps provide closure. The way the helper role is changing in the different projects is, however, something to discuss. In the main projects in the books, the foster parent/adoptive parent is a helper. However, the protagonist also seems to function as a helper in the foster parent's life. Matilda is the one helping Miss Honey get her life and home back from Miss Trunchbull, and Willie is the one helping Mister Tom get back to his social life in the village, and his old, happy self. To Dolphin this is a bit different. She is helping her foster mother take care of the other children in the foster home, but in general, this does not apply to this story in the same way as the others. One reason for this could be that the part of the story where Dolphin is in her foster parent's life is considerably shorter than in the two other protagonists. Seeing this in relation to the Postmodern Metaplot (Wilson, 2015) it appears like the foster parent is being invited into the protagonist's inner life after a while, even if the protagonist physically was placed into the life of the foster parent.

Donaldson (2004) claims that there is a connection between the social aspect and the home life. "If the parent is either abusive or absent, the child will experience extreme difficulty in

social relationships and in the development of self-esteem” (Donaldson, p. 134). Donaldson’s article was written about Roald Dahl’s stories, but ironically this does not appear to be a problem in *Matilda*. However, the theory is central when looking at the other primary literature. Willie is experiencing many problems in his social life while living with his mother, not having any friends and being bullied by his classmates. Dolphin does not have any friends in school before she meets Oliver and seems to struggle with the social relations going on in the classroom and the schoolyard. The social aspect of the school situation is particularly present in *The Illustrated Mum* and *Goodnight Mister Tom*, seemingly affecting the protagonists’ perception of the general school situation. Willie was bullied at his school in London because of his clean and proper appearance, while Dolphin is bullied due to her old and dirty clothes. Both of these aspects of their appearance is linked to their home situations. Willie’s mother would have punished him if he came home dirty, while Dolphin is sticking to her old and dirty clothes because of the protective layer it creates around the aspects of her life she is trying to hide.

The school experience is different in all three books. While both Willie and Matilda are having a good experience socially in their current classes, Dolphin is going through bullying in her everyday life. This does appear to affect their way of seeing the school situation and their teachers. As Dolphin’s teacher does not appear to notice or care about the bullying that is going on in her classroom, this appears to affect Dolphin’s way of seeing her. The other characters have a safe character in their primary teachers, while Dolphin is hiding from hers in the library. The situation the reader is introduced to with Dolphin can also be related to the situation Willie was experiencing back in London.

Another interesting aspect is how the characters mental state affects their way of viewing their teachers. In this regards all three books stand out. Matilda’s life changes drastically when starting school, and after meeting Miss Honey, she is able to start developing her knowledge and powers. This means that when Matilda starts school and the days she is attending school she is in her best possible environment. She is, therefore, able to open up to her teachers, and by doing this, letting them help her make the change that is needed in order for her to life to get better. Willie first meets his favorite teacher on his first day in Little Weirwold. His first impression lasts throughout the book and the fact that he quickly is able to trust and care about her, later allows her to help him deal with his pain. Dolphin, on the other hand, is still in the middle of the maltreatment situation while attending school. Unlike the other characters,

she is also struggling with social aspects of her school life. The fact that her teacher is unable to help her with this, leaves Dolphin unsure whether or not the teachers have the ability to help her deal with the maltreatment aspect of her life.

The aspect of mental illness linked to child maltreatment is central to two of the books; *The Illustrated Mum* and *Goodnight Mister Tom*. While Dolphin's mum is admitted to a mental hospital, Willie's mother ends up committing suicide due to what was believed to be mental health issues. Marigold is explicitly said to have a mental health issue, and this is further confirmed as she is sent to hospital to get treatment after a breakdown. Willie's mother is never confirmed to have a diagnosis. However, there are several mentions of her mental health, both by Tom and some of her neighbors. Her religion and her fear of God are often used to describe her way of being, but this cannot be used to defend all of her actions and her way of being and treating others. Also, the fact that she did not live by what she was preaching to Willie, by getting pregnant outside of marriage, and lying to get what she wanted, indicate that it is not only her faith that is the catalyst for what she is doing. All further indicates that she was struggling with mental health issues. Unlike Marigold, Willie's mother's diagnose is never revealed. In fact, it is most likely she was never properly diagnosed at all.

The element of magic is present in both *The Illustrated Mum* and *Matilda*. While Matilda actually has magical powers, Dolphin only really wishes for some (Wilson, 2012, p. 60). Dolphin several times throughout the story imagines her green "witch eyes" being able to turn people into other objects and making people do things that would embarrass them. Especially Mrs. Hill is the object in these fantasies. While Matilda is able to perform magic to get back at a teacher she dislike, Dolphin only imagines it, using it as a shield against reality. In a way, this becomes a coping mechanism for when they as children no longer can stand up to the authoritative figures in their lives. The fact that both Matilda and Dolphin thinks about/actually performs a form of negatively loaded magic upon their teachers is a central point in looking at the relationships between them. While Matilda uses her magic abilities to scare of her teacher, Dolphin simply wants to embarrass her.

Another aspect of the literature that is important to notice is the importance of the narrator. Looking at *Matilda* and *Goodnight Mr. Tom* where the narrator is third person omniscient the teacher's way of dealing with maltreatment is seen in the more clinical and straightforward

way. On the other hand, in *The Illustrated Mum* where the narrator is first person, the teacher's role needs more consideration and to be further analyzed. When looking at Miss Hill's character, the reader's way of seeing what is happening is crucial to their way of understanding her reactions and actions. In *Matilda* and *Good Night Mr. Tom*, the teachers' role is always clear and there are no questions regarding their intentions. However, in *The Illustrated Mum*, one can be left wondering about the true intentions and the depth of the knowledge Miss Hill is left with. If only considering what Dolphin is narrating, one will be left with an idea of Miss Hill only being spiteful and careless. However, this will most likely change when trying to see the story from her point of view.

Whether the child maltreatment situations in the books are a theme or function can be discussed. In all of the books there the maltreatment plays a part in moving the plot forward. In *Matilda* and *The Illustrated Mum* the plot of the story would not progress if it were not for the maltreatment aspects of the books. Because Matilda is deprived of her educational and emotional needs, she is able to build up the inner strength to fight to assert her self and the weaker characters in the story. Dolphin's quest for her family to be fully functioning, have a stable adult figure in her life and to have a good day-to-day school life would not have been as clear if it were not for Marigold's inability to take proper care of her children. In *Goodnight Mister Tom* the situations might be seen in a different way. The main catalyst here is the war, and that would have happened independently from Willie's situation. His way of being raised does, however, strongly affect his way of being, and as the main project is he discovering or creating himself, it is strongly linked to his previous living situation. This makes the maltreatment important as a function to the plot also in this book.

The portrayal of the elements of maltreatment and the character's reaction to these are interesting to compare. When Willie's mother hits him in the face when he offers to take her bags, and when Marigold hits Dolphin in the face when Dolphin is being negative about them finding Mickey, are two episodes that in many ways are comparable, but get completely different reactions from the characters involved. The situations appear to be quite similar as they involve mothers hitting their children. However, the reactions from both the children and the parents are very different. Willie's mother slaps his hand hard when he offers to help her. The result of this is her yelling at him, and him apologizing. Marigold slaps Dolphin in the face, and the result is Marigold breaking down in guilt. This could again be used in arguing if the maltreatment situation is active or passive.

Nikolajeva (2002) introduced the theory of *in loco parentis*, mentioning the old family member as a possible parent substitute. None of the characters in the primary literature has this old relative that can take over the parental role, as the biological parents are unable to take care of their children. Still, an old person functioning as a form of “fairy godparent” is present in both *Goodnight Mister Tom* and *The Illustrated Mum*. While Willie arrives to an old and grumpy man, Mister Tom turns into a sort of savior and can be seen as a “fairy godfather.” Dolphin ends up in a foster home with an older lady that provides her with a safe and stable home and helps her with both practical and emotional issues. *Matilda* is the only book where this character is not present in the form of an elder person. Still, Beauvais’ (2015) theory about Matilda functioning as a fairy godmother to Miss Honey can be seen in relation to this.

It appears to be a connection between the role the teacher characters are given and all of the other characters in the plot. The teacher characters’ role is affected by the protagonists, their way of dealing with the maltreatment, the extent of the maltreatment, the role of the biological parents and the role “the other adults” are given. If the protagonist appears to be in a safe place without any direct threat to them, either mentally or physically, or if the protagonists have anyone else than the teacher to turn to, the teacher’s role in the maltreatment situation appears smaller and less significant. Matilda is in a situation where she has no one to turn to except herself and her powers, so Miss Honey stands up for her, and they solve the situation together. Dolphin has Star to take care of her and can seek refuge in the library or, after a while, in her new foster home, providing her with the care she needs. Willie can turn to Mister Tom for support, meaning his teachers do not have the same expectations towards them to deal directly with the situation.

As stated in the introduction, the teacher’s role in the maltreatment situations is, the most central aspect of this thesis. Analyzing and discussing the different aspects of the books linked to the maltreatment situations provide a complex image of the situations the protagonists are in. By seeing this in relation to the teacher characters and the roles they are given, provides a conclusion to the thesis statement. It appears as if the characters are given a role based on the needs the protagonist have in the situations they are in. None of the protagonists are left absolutely alone for longer periods of time. In *Matilda*, the protagonist is never in direct danger. She is neglected and maltreated, but she is never in life threatening

danger. Miss Honey is placed in the story to provide Matilda with what she needs the most; love, interest and intellectual challenges. When this is provided, Matilda is able to develop and assert herself and the weaker characters in the story. Miss Trunchbull does, on the other hand, provide the plot with a humorous element adding another opponent for Matilda to test her abilities against. In *The Illustrated Mum*, Star is a safe character for Dolphin to lean on for most of the plot. Even if she at times is unable to take care of and provide Dolphin with what she needs, Marigold is also present for most of the plot. Miss Hill is in the story to provide the element of reality and provide a character that only is functioning as an opponent in Dolphin's life. She does, however, also represent a more realistic teacher character. Her inability to act due to Dolphin never admitting what is happening at home adds another layer to the character. This does, however, not excuse her inability to discover and deal with the bullying that is happening at school. In *Goodnight Mister Tom* Mrs. Hartridge is mainly given the role of educator. Willie is no longer in the maltreatment situation and is getting the love and care he needs on a day-to-day basis at home. This leaves Mrs. Hartridge in a position to only be an educator and friend.

6. Final reflections and further research

6.1. Final reflections

Teacher characters are often present in books where the protagonist is at an age where it would be natural for them to attend school. This also includes the books where child maltreatment is present as a theme. Creating a consciousness regarding how the teacher characters are portrayed in these situations, and how this portrayal is affected by the outside factors, has been the main motivation behind this project. I think that this could help create a better image of the impression children get of the teacher character's ability to deal with these situations through children's literature.

Findings in the close reading shows that, despite similarities in the protagonists' lives, there are large differences regarding how the teacher characters are portrayed, and which roles they are given in the story. The thesis shows that the teacher characters often are portrayed as either "good" helpers and supporters of the protagonist, or "evil" opponents, working against the protagonist's main project. How the factors around the teacher characters seem to affect how they are portrayed is one of the main focuses of the thesis. The expectations in and around the protagonist, the extent of the maltreatment, the biological parents and the role "the other adults" are given, all appears to affect how the teacher characters are portrayed in situations where they meet pupils dealing with child maltreatment.

Looking at the three books a pattern is apparent. In one way or another, there is one "good" teacher character functioning as a helper, and one "bad" teacher character functioning as an opponent, present in all of the primary literature. In *Matilda* this aspect is perhaps the most apparent, as Miss Honey and Miss Trunchbull are clear opposites and distinctly fill the helper and opponent actants. In *The Illustrated Mum*, Miss Hill is turned into the opponent by her way of acting, and Dolphin's perception of her, while Mr. Harrison is placed in the helper actant. The structure is perhaps the hardest to identify in *Goodnight Mister Tom* as all of the teacher characters in Willie's new hometown function as helpers. There is, however, a mention of Willie's old teacher from London, Mr. Barrett, and his torturous ways of treating the children. This, and how his way of acting affected Willie's perception of school, teachers, and his own abilities, turns Mr. Barrett into a clear opponent.

It appears like all the factors in and around the protagonist are central to the expectations to

the teacher characters from the other characters present in the plot. In *Matilda* (Dahl, 2016) there are expectations to the teacher to help develop Matilda's abilities and knowledge and teach and encourage her to assert herself, all while creating a safe and nurturing environment for her to grow in. In *The Illustrated Mum* (Wilson, 2012) the expectations to the teachers are for them to discover what is really happening at home and at school, and help fix or improve the situation, all while creating a safe place for her to be. While in *Goodnight Mister Tom* (Magorian, 2014) the expectations to the teachers is more educational, as the maltreatment aspect of Willie's life is being dealt with at home.

The teacher character's roles, and the expectations to them, appear to be strongly linked to the situation the children are in, just like in the real world.

6.1. Limitations of thesis and further research

While writing a Master's thesis, choices have to be made in order to stay inside the frames laid out for the thesis. Some of these choices are methodical, while some are literary. Some of the literary choices made in this thesis include elements such as which books to choose as my primary literature, and which aspects of maltreatment to focus on. This also includes which characters and character relations that will be the main focus in the thesis. These choices all create a base for how the study turned out.

Using literary analysis as a method, could in some ways limit the thesis. Because the method is a broad and inclusive method, including all aspects of the literature, choices were made in order to fit the frames of the thesis. For further research, it would be interesting to consider the aspects not included in this thesis, such as for example the paratexts and language.

First and foremost it would have been rewarding to conduct the same study on different books, providing a more extensive base for comparison. Doing this could provide a base for a more generalized conclusion. Also conducting a similar study focusing on different characters and character relations, or different maltreatment situations, including sexual abuse, could also help provide a broader aspect of the topic.

Hopefully, the research conducted will help provide new information to the field, and maybe provide a base for further research on the topic.

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