

Realistic and Fantastic Elements in the Works of Roald Dahl

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Abstract: *In most literary works, especially in children's literature, Roald Dahl is well-known for blending fantasy with realism. This article examines how Dahl creates an appealing storyline by contrasting fantastical and unbelievable events with real-life situations, characters, and societal issues. By utilizing a literary analysis, this research paper categorizes and differentiates realism and fantasy in a few of the author's works, including Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, The BFG, and Matilda. According to the findings, Dahl employed the tool of realism to make his novels in a recognizable setting, whereas fantasy was intended to motivate readers and tackle crucial global issues.*

Key words: *the Author, blend of realism and fantasy, fantastic elements, realistic elements, moral lessons, childhood struggles, real-life issues*

Introduction

Among well-known writers of children's books, Roald Dahl stands for mixing the fantastical things with the everyday life. Although his characters undergo usual childhood challenges such as loneliness, bullying, and ignorance, they are mainly set in magical and fantastical backgrounds. In addition to improving readers' imaginations, this great fusion of fantasy and realism makes it engaging to analyse contemporary issues in ways that are both approachable and applicable for all young readers. Therefore, a crucial question arises: How can Roald Dahl combine these two key factors: fantasy and realism to write stories that are both enjoyable and essential for young readers? This study is immensely significant because it explores how Dahl's combination of fantasy and realism influences the themes, characters, and summary of his works. Dahl's method of mixing these two parts of realistic settings and entire imaginative universes, are rare for some authors. The way that fiction and reality are used in children's books «enables young readers to learn complex moral and psychological problems in a safe and imaginative pace,» opines Maria Nikolajeva (2005). This concept is consistent with Dahl's writing, where the imagination is to overcome challenges in the actual world. As an illustration, in Matilda, the girl's unusual telekinetic abilities are ignored in most times, however this kid used her ability to increase deep genuine drives, playing as an essential tool for patience and inner strength. Additionally, the literary work of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory investigates the main themes of morality, generosity, and aspiration by contrasting the wonderful and peaceful world of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory with the difficult realities of poverty.

Prominent scholar Jack Zipes (2001) have also emphasized how Dahl's works usually describe societal norms and injustices through critical approach, motivating readers to challenge authority and contemplate critically and logically about the world that surrounded them. In this case, this research aims to thoroughly understand such analyses by concentrating on the specific narrative techniques

which Dahl employed to fuse realism and fantasy. In a sense, in the BFG, Sophie's lonely life as a lonely young orphan is contrasted with unrealistic, dreamlike adventures she starts with the Big Giant, who possess essential themes of affection, justice, and courage.

Even though most of the children's books include whether fantastical worlds or characters, Dahl's unconventional style closely connected with his ability to incorporate magical elements in real-world contexts. For instance, in the story of Matilda, the constant challenges of a genius, however neglected child are transformed by her unbelievable magical powers. Moreover, the story of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, vivid portrayal of life contrasts with the exotic fantastical world of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory. Via this approach, the writer further challenges his young readers to engage in critical thinking about social issues that most of the time they don't know, while simultaneously encouraging them to open the real power of imagination. That's why, this research paper is conducted to analyze how Dahl skillfully interrelates realistic and fantastic elements in his works, such as in Matilda, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, and The BFG. By examining the narrative techniques, main themes, and character development in these three stories, the research will highlight vital points that how Dahl uses this technique in motivating readers, teaching moral lessons, and creativity.

Methods

The prime objective of this study is to analyse how the author Roald Dahl mixes elements of realism and fantasy within his novels, especially in the chosen following books: Charlie and Chocolate factory, Matilda and BFG. In this case, the analysis will emphasize on portraying the main interactions of these two themes of Dahl's works by showing their contribution toward the book, relevant themes, and moral lessons. Focus will be on the approach for analysis, and the classification of elements used for the analysis.

Corpus of Study:

The three literary novels were chosen for this analysis so as to identify various Dahl's storytelling technique and his ability to blend both realism and fantasy. The selected literary works are:

1. **Matilda (1988):** literary work of a gifted, lonely ignored little girl who utilises her magical and unique powers to prevent cruelty of her family and school principal.
2. **Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (1964):** The story about a boy leading a life a miserable way wins a golden ticket and pays a visit to a magical chocolate factory, where he come across with incredible adventures and life lessons.
3. **The BFG (1982):** Poor orphan girl's adventures with a kind -hearted giant and experiences a world of magic of dreams, despite being with a group of cruel and terrifying giants.

These texts were selected due to the fact that it addresses wide range of real-life problems that are important to children, such as idisregar, poverty, and violence, blended with magical elements such as telekinesis, unusual creatures, and dream capture. Combination of these themes makes them exemplary and crucial for learning how the writer uses these points in his writing.

Analytical Approach

This study uses qualitative literary analysis to understand how Roald Dahl combines realism and fantasy in his works. This is done by carefully examining the central elements of his stories, character, setting, and plot development, which are categorized as either realism or fantasy. The main goal is to determine how Dahl incorporates these two elements to help develop the story's plot, deepen the nature and development of the characters, and convey key lessons or messages. The elements of realism in many of Dahl's stories often vividly reflect the everyday struggles and experiences of children in the real world, including family problems, social inequality, and personal growth. Fantasy, on the other hand, adds a sense of wonder and escape by introducing magic, mythical creatures, and fantastical events.

1. *Realistic Elements:*

Characters: Dahl mostly mixes sympathetic characters with real-life problems into his writings. For example, Matilda, a intelligent but neglected youngster, reflects the difficulties that children face on a daily basis as she struggles with her controlling school system and inattentive parents. Charlie Bucket's constant familial issues and poverty can give the reader a realistic insight in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, while Willy Wonka's fantastical factory drastically contrasts Charlie's everyday life. Family relationship, social injustice, and personal development are among the real-life struggles these characters often come across, which makes the novels emotionally appealing to readers.

Settings: The settings of Roald Dahl's works are mostly set in reality with a realistic base which can give authenticity to the settings. Realistic settings, such as a small, ordinary household, cruel school environment, are essential ones for very special, young girl with extraordinary skills in Matilda. In Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, the contrast is drawn from Charlie's humble, impoverished home to the extravagant, fairytale-like chocolate factory. These realistic settings explored in the story in such a pace that the fantastical elements, when they do appear, have a greater impact.

Social Issues: Dahl uses realist settings to address some of the major social issues, such as child neglect, poverty, and inequality. The critique of wealth and class is explored in «Charlie and the Chocolate Factory» as Charlie's family lives in appalling conditions, while the rich children in the story have the opportunity to visit the factory. Dahl uses these real-life issues to illustrate morality, as characters with negative traits (such as greed, avarice, and selfishness) are punished, while the virtuous Charlie is rewarded for his humility and decency.

2. *Fantastic Elements:*

In contrast to realism, Dahl's stories are full of fantastical elements that create worlds of wonder and curiosity. These elements are integral to Dahl's style, and magic and fantasy serve not only as a means of escape but also as a way to solve real-life problems.

Magical Abilities: Many of Dahl's characters have extraordinary abilities that allow them to break the rules of conventional reality. For example, Matilda's telekinetic powers give her certain psychic powers over objects, while the BFG's ability to capture and transmit dreams defies the physical world. These magical abilities often serve as a means to help the character overcome a challenge, such as defeating Miss Trunchbull in Matilda or solving problems that would otherwise be impossible in real life, such as the BFG's ability to stop evil giants.

Magical Creatures of Nature: Other fantastical elements in Dahl's works are the creatures that populate his worlds. In The BFG, the giants are mythological creatures of varying sizes and personalities, some, like the BFG, are kind, while others are dangerous and frightening. These creatures introduce an element of fear, but their presence also inspires readers to think about the world in a more imaginative way.

Surreal Incidents: Dahl is known for his imaginative and sometimes absurd incidents that push the reader's imagination beyond its limits. In Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, the events that take place in Willy Wonka's factory range from children being turned into giant blueberries to being sucked into pipes. These surreal incidents often serve as a means of teaching a lesson about the consequences of behavior, but they also engage the reader's curiosity and wonder.

Categorization of Realism and Fantasy:

For the purposes of this study, the division of elements into realism and fiction is based on the following distinctions:

Realism: Real-world elements, such as realistic characters, places, and social issues that children can easily relate to, are called realism. They provide the basis for the story to work and the backdrop against which the fiction can take place. In Dahl's novels, realism often includes universal themes such as justice, the power of good, and the triumph of good over evil.

Fantasy: Going beyond the boundaries of reality, it is expressed through magical powers, mythological creatures, and surreal events. Fantasy provides a certain imaginative setting that

enhances the story and solves the problems identified in the realism section. These two categories interact with each other, engaging the reader emotionally and intellectually in a dynamic way.

Results

Roald Dahl's works, such as *Matilda*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and *The BFG*, show a strong interplay between realism and fantasy elements, which not only entertain young readers, but also serve to convey deeper messages about moral values, societal norms, and personal growth. The findings, based on specific examples from Dahl's texts, the patterns observed, and the role of these elements in reader engagement and theme development are presented below.

Characters

Dahl's characters often seem to resonate with children's real-life experiences. In *Matilda*, Matilda Wormwood is a girl with extraordinary talent, but she faces neglect from her parents and the mistreatment of her school principal, Miss Trunchbull. Parental neglect and bullying at school are realities that children can face in similar situations, so Matilda's journey is relevant to children who feel isolated or powerless in the world around them, as she does. Thus, Dahl's depiction of Matilda's struggle in a way that is deeply rooted in the emotional and social realities of children's world gives the work its authenticity and impact.

In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Charlie Bucket is depicted as the archetypal good boy who tries his best. The realism of Charlie's life – a loving but needy family – enhances the significance of his characteristics. The contrast between his difficult circumstances and the magic of the factory heightens the thematic tension between materialism and morality, poverty and virtue.

Similarly, in *The BFG*, the depiction of Sophia as an orphan living in a very ordinary and institutional environment is realistic and readable. The everyday, ordinary environment to which she belongs forms a sharp contrast against her fantastical journey with the Good Friend the Giant. This contrast clearly defines how the ordinary and the fantastic coexist in Dahl's works.

Settings

Dahl uses realism to ensure the authenticity of the characters and their experiences in order to connect with the reader. In *Matilda*, her home is a symbol of neglect, and the depressing atmosphere of her bedroom and school heighten the emotional burden of her situation. This realism heightens the impact of the fantastical events that follow—especially Matilda's telekinetic abilities and her eventual triumph. In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Charlie's poor family lives in a small, dilapidated house, which seems to parallel the economic experiences of many of the readers. The juxtaposition of Charlie's ordinary world with his magical candy factory, his factory filled with fantastic inventions and imaginary geography, reinforces themes of purity, virtue, and the consequences of self-reliance.

Situations

Dahl's depiction of realistic situations, such as family neglect, bullying at school, and poverty, provides a setting for a fantastical adventure. In *Matilda*, Matilda reflects on realities such as the oppression she experiences at the hands of her parents and Miss Trunchbull, the neglect and authoritarianism that children understand and empathize with. The resolution of these struggles through Matilda's intelligence and inner strength provides hope and empowerment. Poverty is a key element in Charlie's real-life struggle in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. His determination, humility, and friendship in the face of adversity resonate deeply with readers in similar situations. Willy Wonka's fantastical journey through the chocolate factory tests Charlie's goodness, punishes others for their evil, and reinforces the moral lessons of the work.

Magical Settings and Events: The settings in Dahl's works often reflect the contrasts between the ordinary and the fantastic. In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the chocolate factory itself is a world of fantasy, full of surprises and magical elements that stretch the limits of reality. The factory is a playground of imagination where the laws of physics are bent to create a world that is both magical and morally instructive. The fantastical journey Charlie takes through the factory brings into sharp focus the consequences of actions and choices, illustrating the moral lessons Dahl tries to convey. The

land of giants in *The BFG* is surreal, offering a larger-than-life adventure. From the dream-catching scenes to the journey to the Queen's palace and the battles against the evil giants, one finds himself in a setting where the boundaries of the possible are stretched. A world of endless possibilities and adventure.

Surreal Events and Experiences: Events that are surreal are a hallmark of Dahl's works, serving both to entertain and teach valuable lessons. In *Matilda*, this includes the development of Matilda's telekinetic powers: objects floating in the air, water glasses sliding across the table. It is an escape into the fantastic world and at the same time a symbolic expression of growing self-awareness and inner strength. The surreal quality of these events underlines the triumph of intellect and morality over injustice and tyranny. In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, surreal events like the magical elevator and the peculiar transformations of the children who visited the factory are used to depict consequences of moral choices. Such fantastical events raise the stakes of the story and make the factory a space of testing and measuring good and bad behaviors-both literally and metaphorically.

Exploring the Balance of Realism and Fantasy in Roald Dahl's Works

Realistic Elements	Transition to Fantasy	Moral and emotional impact
Relatable characters (e.g., Matilda, Charlie, Sophie)	Characters gain extraordinary abilities (e.g., Matilda's telekinetic powers)	Empowerment through fantasy (e.g., Matilda's powers overcome injustice)
Everyday struggles (e.g., parental neglect, bullying, poverty)	Magical settings (e.g., Willy Wonka's factory, land of giants in <i>The BFG</i>)	Moral lessons (e.g., rewards for virtue, consequences for vice)
Ordinary settings (e.g., Matilda's home, Charlie's house, Sophie's orphanage)	Surreal events (e.g., floating objects, magical candy creations)	Real struggles enhance the emotional depth of fantasy events

Discussions

Fantasy as a Means to Enhance the Moral or Emotional Impact of Realistic Issues

The way Dahl infuses fantasy into realistic struggles makes it possible for him to focus on states involved in emotional and moral voyages that his characters embark on. His stories often focus on marginalized or vulnerable figures such as maltreated or misunderstood children by grownups, like *Matilda* or *The Witches*. With his fantastic elements, Dahl opens avenues for these characters' empowerment, where the supernatural element serves not only as an outlet of escape but also as an essential mechanism for justice and growing up. Take *The Witches*, for example: the story of a young boy, Bruno, who is pursued with relentless cruelty by a gathering of despicably evil witches. While their cruelty has its roots in realism in the way society can often be cruel to outsiders and how children are expected to fall in line, Dahl couches it in a fantasy setting in which the witches' magical powers are the ultimate barrier for the protagonist. In this encounter with witches, Bruno had to depend on something more than his intelligence: he made use of the elements of fantasy-a potion that could change the witches into mice-to even the score. This act of reversal makes the moral message even greater: the powerless can get back their agency, even in front of forces of a great evil. Besides, in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the improbable nature of Willy Wonka's factory is fully lined with unimaginable inventions and transformations, which mirror those grim realities of the moral failings of the children. Augustus Gloop's insatiable greed, Veruca Salt's entitled selfishness, and Violet Beauregarde's compulsive competitiveness are exaggerated traits representing real-world flaws. But by cloaking it in fantasy, Dahl dramatizes their behaviors to ridiculousness, thereby making these lessons of moderation and respect for others much more pronounced and remembered. These are not just fantastical scenarios that entertain but create the emotional journey of the characters, allowing for an opportunity of transformation that is more pronounced and satisfying in the context of the fantastical. The magical elements are integral to how the characters evolve, teaching readers that

internal growth, moral clarity, and personal power can triumph over real-world constraints of mistreatment, oppression, or injustice.

His style may also be compared to other authors who have used the combination of realism and fantasy to bring similar emotional and moral affects: Lewis Carroll and J.K. Rowling. Through Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Carroll similarly combines fantasy with elements of the real world; he creates a world completely disavowing logic and reason. Much like Dahl, Carroll uses fantastical characters and settings to explore deeper themes such as identity, authority, and societal expectations. However, while the work of Carroll often leans into absurdity and illogical humor, Dahl's fantasy elements tend to serve more direct, moralistic purposes. For example, whereas Alice challenges the very notion of reason and order, Dahl's works, such as *Matilda*, use fantastical elements to reinforce the triumph of goodness over evil. While Carroll is taken with the absurd, Dahl's fantasy is much more functional-the magic serves to make good on the real-life challenges. J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books align with Dahl in approach; both use fantasy to create worlds richer and more layered than this one, but for different purposes altogether. While Dahl's fantasy serves to highlight the emotional and moral stakes of the characters' real-world problems, Rowling's creates a more expansive universe in which young readers can act out friendship, courage, and identity. In contrast to Dahl's relatively simple constructs of fantasy-matilda's telekinetic powers or the chocolate factory-are very simplistic in comparison to the involved magic system of Rowling, which is deeply intertwined within the structure of the narrative. However, both authors use fantasy to deal with issues such as self-discovery, the fight between good and evil, and personal growth. The stories of Dahl are often more overtly moral in their messages, while those of Rowling are nuanced in the exploration of the hero's journey.

Conclusion

In this paper, the interplay of realism and fantasy in Roald Dahl's works has been explored through key texts like *Matilda*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and *The BFG*. Dahl's ability to mix the ordinary, relatable experiences with fantastical elements not only engages young readers but also reinforces important moral and social messages. The characters' struggles with real-life issues, such as neglect, poverty, and bullying, give a base to more magical and surreal elements in the stories. These allow Dahl to tackle some pretty complex themes-personal growth, resilience, and morality, for example-in a way that resonates with his audience. Key findings indicate that Dahl's fantastic elements are not escapist; they have a very substantial and relevant connection with the larger emotional and social realities children are going through. This may include magic abilities that enable certain characters like *Matilda*, or some fantastic place such as the chocolate factory owned by Willy Wonka, used in the story to show consequences for human behavior regarding moral decisions. Through the use of the ordinary and the extraordinary in contrast to each other, Dahl presents a world where real and magical experiences coexist, promising the readers an entertaining and instructive journey. The importance of this analysis is to understand how Dahl's works function on many levels-not just as riveting stories for children but as conveyors of salient life lessons. Future research might investigate the psychological influence of Dahl's works on children, especially regarding how his characters and their experiences could affect young readers' emotional development, empathy, and understanding of moral complexities. Secondly, a comparison of Dahl's use of fantasy in his narratives with that of other authors who use fantasy and realism, such as J.K. Rowling or Lewis Carroll, would further help to understand the enduring popularity of such works in children's literature.

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