

# THE CHARACTERIZATIONS OF MISS TRUNCHBULL AS ANTAGONIST IN ROALD DAHL'S *MATILDA*

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## ABSTRACT

The present study examines the antagonist in Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, namely Miss Trunchbull. While previous studies focused on feminist and moral values of the protagonist, limited attention has been addressed to the antagonist's role in shaping narrative conflict. The present study employed interpretive qualitative approach to analyze Miss Trunchbull's traits and her role as an antagonistic force in the novel. Through close reading and interactive qualitative data analysis model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, the findings reveal that Miss Trunchbull functions as the primary source of conflict, oppression, and fear that drives the narrative forward. Her characterizations, namely rude, authoritarian, arrogant, intimidating, malevolent, cunning, disciplined, and sturdy obstruct the protagonist's development. The present study contributes to children's literature criticism by highlighting the ideological significance of antagonistic characters in literary studies.

**Keyword:** children literature, characterization, antagonist, Miss Trunchbull

## INTRODUCTION

Characters in literature are fictional figures who have certain characteristics, moral values, and emotions that are displayed through their actions and interactions in the story (Abrams, 1999; Gill: 1955). In narrative works, characters play an important role because they convey the message of the story, themes, and conflicts. Understanding of characters in fiction is done by looking at their relationship with the plot, the way the author develops the character and the important changes experienced throughout the story (Pickering & Hoepfer, 1981).

Based on their function, characters in literary works are generally divided into two, namely the protagonist and the antagonist (Demon & Yohannes, 2023; Morner & Rausch, 1998). The protagonist is the main character who is the center of the reader's attention because the conflicts and events in the story are centered on them. On the other hand, the antagonist is the opposite of the protagonist and acts as a source of conflict in the story. The existence of antagonists is very important because without any conflict caused, the storyline will not develop dynamically (Abrams & Harpham, 2012; Baldick, 2015). However, the division of protagonist and antagonist is not always related to absolute moral judgment, as characters in literature are often complex and have a mixture of positive and negative traits that make them feel more realistic (Morner & Rausch, 1998). The antagonist does not always have to be an individual character; it may also be a group of people, a force of nature, or even the internal psychological traits of a character. The term antagonist does not necessarily indicate absolute moral evil because fictional characters often possess both positive and negative qualities (Abrams, 1999: 47; Gill, 1995:127; Kennedy & Gioia, 1995: 68).

As the main character, the protagonist is often the center of attention in literary studies. Many studies focus on the protagonist to reveal the moral message, character development and ideological values contained in the story. However, the meaning of the protagonist cannot be separated from the antagonist. Thus, attention to the antagonist is equally important in understanding the narrative as a whole. A number of empirical studies have examined antagonistic figures in children's literature and popular literature, such as the analysis of Lady of the Green Kirtle in *The Silver Chair* (Iswari et al., 2025), Professor Snape in *Harry Potter*

and the Philosopher's Stone (Suwastini et al., 2023), Maleficent in Mistress of Evil (Suwastini et al., 2022), Grand High Witch in The Witches (Suwastini et al., 2024), as well as Queen Jadis in the Narnia series (Ariyani et al., 2025). These studies show that antagonists have complex characterizations and play an important role in building conflicts, power relations, and ideological messages in literary works.

One of the children's novels that is rich in value is *Matilda* by Roald Dahl. This novel contains various important values, such as heroism, gender roles, and feminism, and is recognized as one of the best children's novels. Therefore, *Matilda* has attracted the attention of many researchers. Several empirical studies have examined this novel from the perspective of gender and feminism, such as the research of Anggraeni (2016) who found the existence of a patriarchal culture in the Wormwood family, and the study of Dickinson (2017) and Suwastini (2021) which revealed the values of feminism in female characters. The value of heroism in this novel has also been analyzed by Hansson (2012) and Beauvais (2015), who affirm that *Matilda* represents a child with high morality who is able to resist the injustice of adults. However, these studies tend to focus on moral messages and protagonists, without paying special attention to the antagonists.

In the novel, Miss Trunchbull is the main antagonist who becomes a source of conflict for *Matilda* and the other students. Miss Trunchbull is portrayed as an authoritarian figure who uses power, violence, and repressive discipline to control the school environment. Although her role is very dominant in building the conflict of the story, until now there have not been many empirical studies that specifically analyze Miss Trunchbull's traits as an antagonist. The analysis of the character of Miss Trunchbull is important to understand the power relations, conflicts, and ideological messages conveyed in the novel. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the characteristics of Miss Trunchbull in Roald Dahl's novel *Matilda* as an antagonist, in order to complement previous studies and provide a more balanced understanding of the role of antagonists in children's literature.

## **METHOD**

The focus of this research is the character of Miss Trunchbull in the novel *Matilda* by Roald Dahl and her function as an antagonist in the story. The entire process was carried out using a four-stage interactive framework by Milis et al. (2014) as shown in Figure 1.

The object of this research is the novel *Matilda*, whose focus is directed to the representation of the character of Miss Trunchbull as well as her actions that reflect her function as an antagonist. This study uses an interpretive qualitative research design because the main objective is to interpret and understand the representation of a literary character and her actions within the narrative context.

Based on Figure 1, all stages of analysis are carried out interactively and simultaneously. The first step is data collection by reading the novel carefully, then noting the important parts and classifications to help gain a thorough understanding of the novel *Matilda*. Through this technique, the researcher can understand the complexity of the storyline as well as the character of Miss Trunchbull. This process is done repeatedly to ensure that the data obtained is robust.

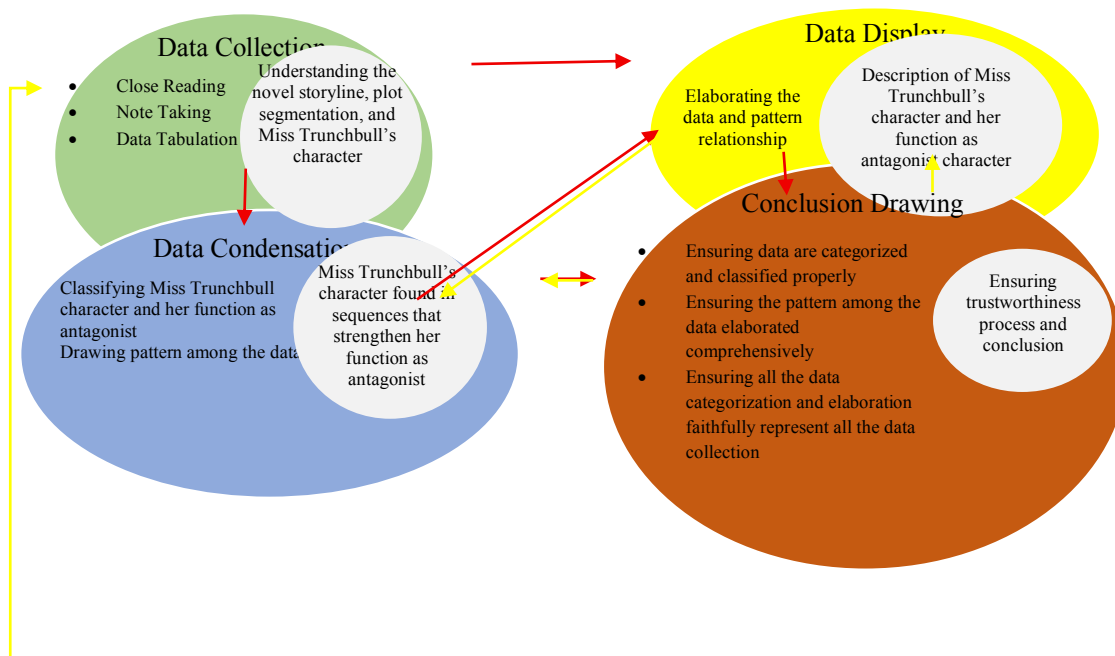


Figure 1. Adaptation of *The Interactive Qualitative Data Analysis Model* by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014)

Next is the process of data condensation and data display which is carried out simultaneously. The data is condensed by grouping the character of Miss Trunchbull and her function as an antagonist. In this stage, the selected excerpts were systematically coded using a thematic coding approach. The coding categories (e.g., rude, authoritarian, arrogant, intimidating, malevolent, cunning, disciplined, and sturdy) were developed through a combination of theory-driven and data-driven processes. Initially, the researcher referred to theoretical concepts of characterization and antagonism (Abrams, 1999; Gill, 1995; Kennedy & Gioia, 1995) to establish preliminary categories. These categories were then refined inductively based on recurring patterns found in the data during repeated readings. The condensed data were then organized and displayed systematically to highlight relationships between traits and their contribution to Miss Trunchbull's role as an antagonist. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification were conducted by interpreting the coded data and reviewing the findings repeatedly. This iterative process continued until no new categories or significant patterns emerged, ensuring the consistency and validity of the analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents a summary of Miss Trunchbull's traits as depicted in the novel. These traits include rude, authoritarian, arrogant, intimidating, malevolent, cunning discipline, and sturdy. By identifying how often particular traits appear in the text, the analysis can highlight the dominant characteristics that shape Miss Trunchbull's antagonistic role. The most frequently appearing traits is rude, which occurs 30 times, followed by authoritarian traits appearing 24 times. The third most common traits that appears arrogant with 18 occurrences, then followed with intimidating traits 16 times, malevolent 5 times, cunning 6 times, followed by discipline appearing 10 times, and sturdy 19 times. The following will explain of these traits in paragraphs along with the evidence of their citations in the novel.

**Table 1. Miss Trunchbull's traits**

No	Traits	Sub-sequences	Frequency
1	Rude	11b, 12e, 12i, 12k, 16a, 16b, 16c, 16d, 17g, 18d, 18e, 20b, 20c, 20f, 20g, 20h, 21b, 21c, 21f, 22f, 22h, 22m, 23a, 23c, 23d, 23m, 26i, 27a, 27b, 29f	30
2	Authoritarian	11b, 12j, 12k, 17e, 18c, 18e, 18f, 20f, 20h, 20i, 20j, 20k, 21d, 21f, 22g, 22l, 23c, 23d, 26j, 26k, 27b, 29d, 29e, 29g	24
3	Arrogant	12h, 12i, 16a, 17f, 18c, 18d, 20b, 20c, 20j, 21b, 22a, 22d, 22i, 22k, 23a, 23m, 29d, 29f	18
4	Intimidating	10i, 12a, 16e, 17a, 17b, 17d, 17e, 17k, 18b, 18c, 20j, 21b, 22e, 26j, 26o, 29c	16
5	Malevolent	12h, 12k, 20c, 22m, 23a	5
6	Cunning	16th, 17j, 26f, 26g, 26k, 26o	6
7	Discipline	11b, 12k, 16g, 16h, 18e, 19a, 19b, 20a, 20d, 29a	10
8	Sturdy	10h, 12d, 16e, 16g, 16h, 17a, 17b, 17d, 17g, 18g, 18j, 20e, 21c, 22f, 23g, 26k, 29b, 29g, 29m	19

### Miss Trunchbull as a Rude Person

Rude refers to behavior that is harsh or hurtful, whether expressed physically or verbally (Mayuuf & Atei, 2024: 778; Townsley et al., 2023: 1). In addition, the Oxford Dictionary (2013: 492) defines rudeness as conduct that is disrespectful, including actions that offend others or violate social norms. These definitions suggest that rude behavior involves a lack of courtesy and an intentional or careless disregard for the feelings of others. Miss Trunchbull's rude traits are the most found in the story. Her rude traits appear 30 times, which includes sub sequences 11b, 12e, 12i, 12k, 16a, 16b, 16c, 16d, 17g, 18d, 18e, 20b, 20c, 20f, 20g, 20h, 21b, 21c, 21f, 22f, 22h, 22m, 23a, 23c, 23d, 23m, 26i, 27a, 27b, 29f. Here is the evidence of Miss Trunchbull's rude traits through sub-sequence 23a when she utters hate speech against children.

Excerpt 1:

*"I have never been able to understand why small children are so disgusting. They are the bane of my life. They are like insects. They should be got rid of as early as possible. We get rid of flies with fly-spray and by hanging up fly-paper. I have often thought of inventing a spray for getting rid of small children. How splendid it would be to walk into this classroom with a gigantic spray-gun in my hands and start pumping it. Or better still, some huge strips of sticky paper. I would hang them all round the school and you'd all get stuck to them and that would be the end of it. Wouldn't that be a good idea, Miss Honey?"*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:132)

From the above quote, Miss Trunchbull showed her rude traits in the way she talked about children. She said that the children are disgusting figure by called them "*the bane of my life*" describing that their existence has made her suffer. Miss Trunchbull also compared them to insects that must be eradicated through her statement "*They are like insects. They should be gotten rid of as early as possible. We get rid of flies with fly-spray and by hanging up fly-paper,*" her words showed that she does not care at all and has no empathy for children, including her students. Furthermore, Miss Trunchbull imagined eradicating children using special tools such as "*fly-spray*" or "*huge strips of sticky paper*" to trap them from moving. Through her statement, Miss Trunchbull show of rude traits which is in accordance with the statement of Townsley, Li-Wang, & Katta (2023: 1) that rude is a behavior that is harsh or hurtful, whether expressed physically or verbally. In addition, this trait makes it a major source of conflict in the novel. Her bad and insulting words cause a lot of problems and tension in the

story. This behavior is what drives the development of the story by triggering many important events including Matilda's resistance. In other words, Miss Trunchbull's ruthless nature shows her function as an antagonist, namely to create conflict and as the main source of problems that occur in the story (Morner & Rausch, 1998: 10).

In sub sequence 23d, Miss Trunchbull's rudeness is clearly illustrated by how she talked and acted toward her students in a manner that is both disrespectful and demeaning.

Excerpt 2:

*"You are a vile, repulsive, repellent, malicious little brute!" the Trunchbull was shouting. "You are not fit to be in this school! You ought to be behind bars, that's where you ought to be! I shall have you drummed out of this establishment in utter disgrace! I shall have the prefects chase you down the corridor and out of the front-door with hockey-sticks! I shall have the staff escort you home under armed guard! And then I shall make absolutely sure you are sent to a reformatory for delinquent girls for the minimum of forty years!"*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:134)

This quote shows Miss Trunchbull's rude attitude through the insults and threats shown to Matilda. Her rude words such as *vile, repulsive, repellent, malicious little brute* used to accuse Matilda of putting a newt in her glass. This shows Miss Trunchbull's rudeness through insults and sarcasm used to hurt someone (Townesley et al., 2023:1; Mayuuf & Atei's 2024: 778). These words were not only rude, but also hurt and humiliated Matilda in front of the other students. This triggered Matilda's actions to oppose her with her own strength because she felt she had been treated unfairly. Miss Trunchbull's abusive actions had provoked Matilda's anger as the protagonist to defend herself and fight against the injustice she experienced. Therefore, the rude traits displayed by Miss Trunchbull reinforce her role as an antagonist, as she acts in opposition to the protagonist and becomes a source of conflict and suffering (Morner & Rausch, 1998: 10).

In sub-sequence 27b, Miss Trunchbull's rude traits can be seen from Miss Honey's childhood memories when Miss Trunchbull gave her an unreasonable command accompanied by a physical action. Miss Trunchbull often gave her physical abuse. Here's an excerpt

Excerpt 3:

*"You haven't seen anything," Miss Honey said. "After my father died, when I was five and a half, she used to make me bath myself all alone. And if she came up and thought I hadn't washed properly she would push my head under the water and hold it there. But don't get me started on what she used to do. That won't help us at all."*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:167)

This quote shows Miss Trunchbull's rude traits through Miss Honey's childhood story. According to Miss Honey's story, Miss Trunchbull forced her to bathe herself and even submerges her head in water as punishment for disobeying her orders. This action indicates the presence of physical aggression that is dangerous. This act is in line with what Mayuuf & Atei's (2024: 778) say that rude is an act that aims to intentionally hurt or degrade another person verbally and physically. In addition, Miss Honey's story is one of the sources that triggered Matilda's desire to punish Miss Trunchbull for her actions. shows this trait to be one of the sources of conflict experienced by the protagonist so that it highlights the function of Miss Trunchbull as an antagonist which means a character who is in conflict with the protagonist as well as who gives rise to conflict in the story (Morner & Rausch, 1998: 10)

### Miss Trunchbull as an Authoritarian Headmaster

According to Fromm (1957: 1), an authoritarian figure is someone who seeks to exercise control, maintain dominance, and impose restrictions on others particularly their followers to ensure obedience to their will. Furthermore, Ardonio et al (1950: 9) explained that authoritarian people act defensively towards other who are in a opposite position to them. The appearance of Miss Trunchbull's authoritarian traits in the novel are 24 times, which includes sub sequences 11b, 12j, 12k, 17e, 18c, 18e, 18f, 20f, 20h, 20i, 20j, 20k, 21d, 21f, 22g, 22l, 23c, 23d, 26j, 26k, 27b, 29d, 29e, 29g. In sub sequences 12j, Miss Trunchbull's authoritarian trait is seen when she rejected Miss Honey's request to move Matilda to the upper class because of her cleverness. But even though it has been explained in detail, Miss Trunchbull refused Miss Honey's request because it is not in accordance with the school rules she made. Below is more detailed explanation of 12j sub-sequences.

Excerpt 4:

*"No, no!" cried Miss Honey. "That is not my reason at all!" "Oh, yes it is!" shouted Miss Trunchbull. "I can see right through your little plot, madam! And my answer is no! Matilda stays where she is and it is up to you to see that she behaves herself." "But Headmistress, please . . ." "Not another word!" shouted Miss Trunchbull. "And in any case, I have a rule in this school that all children remain in their own age groups regardless of ability. Great Scott, I'm not having a little five-year-old brigand sitting with the senior girls and boys in the top form. Whoever heard of such a thing!"*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:74)

Miss Trunchbull very rejected Miss Honey's request without any objection through her statement *"Not another word!"*. This shows his authoritarianism as a principal who demanded Miss Honey follow the rules she has made without any other consideration. Through this excerpt, the trait of Miss Trunchbull is in accordance with what Adorno et al (1950:9) explained that authoritarian people are defensive towards others who have different positions or opinions. Miss Trunchbull's order is absolute, all the school's citizens must follow the rules. This trait is a terror and a barrier to freedom for all school students. Through this trait, Miss Trunchbull plays the role of an antagonist who creates a source of conflict for other actors, especially the protagonist.

Sub sequence 20f shows Miss Trunchbull's authoritarian trait towards her student, Nigel. This quote very clearly describes his dominance over someone. Here's a further explanation of the 20f sub-sequence.

Excerpt 5:

*"I do not want your middle names, you blister!" the Gorgon bellowed. "What is my name?" "Miss Trunchbull," Nigel said. "Then use it when you address me! Now then, let's try again. What is your name?" "Nigel Hicks, Miss Trunchbull," Nigel said.*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:119)

From the above quote, Miss Trunchbull shows her authoritarian leadership in controlling her students. As explained by Fromm (1957:1) an authoritarian seeks to control and dominate his followers to obey his will. Miss Trunchbull demanded that Nigel mention the official title when talking to her. Miss Trunchbull's absolute order caused tension for the students. This shows that he managed to maintain control over his followers. At the same time, it is the main source of problems that arise for other characters. In line with its function as an antagonist who plays a role in giving rise to conflict in the story (Morner & Rausch, 1998: 10)

Furthermore, Miss Trunchbull's authoritarian nature is evident in sub-sequence 221, which illustrates how she uses her power to dictate the actions of those under her authority.

Excerpt 6:

*The Trunchbull sensed what the child was thinking and she didn't like it. "Stand up when you speak to me!" she snapped. "What is your name?"*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988: 131)

Miss Trunchbull shows her complete control as the principal by demanding absolute obedience to Matilda. This is in accordance with what Formm (1957:1) stated that authoritarian nature is a leader who wants to control her followers. In this novel, her followers are her students. Miss Trunchbull's authoritarian behavior created inner conflicts for the protagonist and other characters, making her an obstacle to freedom at school because she has to follow her every wish and punished characters who went against her will. This is in accordance with the statement that the antagonist is the protagonist's inhibiting figure (Pickering & Hoepfer, 1981: 25).

### **Miss Trunchbull as an Arrogant Person**

Arrogant can be defined as the trait of a person who believes that his beliefs and decisions are always the most correct, rejects the judgments of others and often has excessive confidence in herself when interacting with others so that sometimes it has an emotional impact on others (Saputra et al., 2021:35; Tiberus & Walker, 1998: 379). In the novel, it is found that Miss Trunchbull shows arrogant traits 18 times in sub sequences 12h, 12i, 16a, 17f, 18c, 18d, 20b, 20c, 20j, 21b, 22a, 22d, 22i, 22k, 23a, 23m, 29d, 29f. Miss Trunchbull's arrogant trait first appears in sub sequence 12h. This is the moment when Miss Honey was about to explain that Matilda is a smart girl, but before she can convey it, Miss Trunchbull had already confidently expressed her opinion without any clear evidence. Here is a further explanation of the sub sequence 12h.

Excerpt 7:

*"Oh yes, Miss Honey, it darn well is right! In fact, now I come to think of it, I'll bet it was she who put that stink-bomb under my desk here first thing this morning. The place stank like a sewer! Of course it was her! I shall have her for that, you see if I don't! What's she looks like? Nasty little worm, I'll be bound. I have discovered, Miss Honey, during my long career as a teacher that a bad girl is a far more dangerous creature than a bad boy. What's more, they're much harder to squash. Squashing a bad girl is like trying to squash a bluebottle. You bang down on it and the darn thing isn't there. Nasty dirty things, little girls are. Glad I never was one."*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988: 73)

Miss Trunchbull confidently accused Matilda of putting a stinky bomb under her desk without providing any clear evidence. This action showed that Miss Trunchbull believed her own judgment and decisions to be the most correct without regard for anything else. In addition, her rude statements such as calling Matilda a "nasty little worm" reflect her superior attitude as she looks down on others. This quote shows the arrogant nature of Miss Trunchbull, which is someone who believes that her beliefs are the most correct (Saputra et al., 2021:35; Tiberus & Walker, 1998: 379). Moreover, her arrogant nature plays an important role in affirming her function as an antagonist. Abrams & Harpham (2021) explain that the antagonist is the main source of conflict in the story. Miss Trunchbull's arrogant nature who always believes her opinion is most correct puts her in conflict with other characters including Matilda as the

protagonist. Miss Trunchbull confidently accuses Matilda of being the perpetrator of the stink bomb and also condescends with a "nasty little worm". This trait became an obstacle that Matilda had to face.

Furthermore, Miss Trunchbull's arrogant nature can be seen from the sub-sequence 22k when she did not believe that Matilda had read books by Nicholas Nickleby. The following is a further explanation.

Excerpt 8:

*"You are lying to me, madam!" the Trunchbull shouted, glaring at Matilda. "I doubt there is a single child in the entire school who has read that book, and here you are, an unhatched shrimp sitting in the lowest form there is, trying to tell me a whopping great lie like that! Why do you do it? You must take me for a fool! Do you take me for a fool, child?"*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:129)

This quote shows Miss Trunchbull's arrogant nature through her quick and aggressive rejection of Matilda. Miss Trunchbull accuses Matilda of lying and distrusting her intelligence, even calling her an *unhatched shrimp* due to her young age and early grades. This indicated that she dismisses other viewpoints and assumes that her own beliefs are the only correct ones. This aligns with Saputra et al. (2021: 35), who define arrogance as the attitude of believing that one's own views are superior to others. This behavior suppresses Matilda's abilities and causes harmful emotional effects. Because of these actions, Miss Trunchbull can be considered an antagonist, as she obstructs and creates conflict for the protagonist, Matilda.

Miss Trunchbull's arrogant trait can be seen in sub sequence 23m when Miss Trunchbull accused Matilda of putting a newt in her glass for no apparent reason. Below is an explanation of Miss Trunchbull's arrogant nature in sub sequence 23m.

Excerpt 9:

*"I am fed up with you useless bunch of midgets!" roared the Trunchbull. "I refuse to waste any more of my precious time in here!" And with that she marched out of the class-room, slamming the door behind her*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:139)

Miss Trunchbull's actions in the above quote reflect arrogant trait as defined by Saputra et al., 2021:35 and Tiberus & Walker, 1998: 379 that an arrogant person believes that her decision is the most correct, rejects the judgment of others and feels superior to others. Miss Trunchbull confidently alleged that it was Matilda who put the newt in her glass. Although the other students and Miss Honey had stated that no one was moving, she still insisted that Matilda was the culprit. Her rejection of other people's opinions was followed by his condescending words that referred to students as *"useless bunch of midgets"*. Miss Trunchbull dominated the class by showing excessive self confidence as reflected in her statement *"I refuse to waste any more of my precious time in here"* which strongly reflected her arrogant nature. Moreover, Miss Trunchbull's arrogant trait is at odds with Matilda's values of intelligence and courage. This trait is also the main source of problems in the story, as explained by Baldick (2015:18) that the antagonist is a character who is opposed to the main character in a story. Thus Miss Trunchbull's arrogant trait made her as an antagonist who strengthen the storyline and influenced the development of Matilda's character.

### **Miss Trunchbull as an Intimidating Headmaster**

Intimidating is the act of a person who coerces and suppresses through fear or threats directly or indirectly, this also includes signals of domination and implied threats (Murphy,

2014: 33; Anikin, 2024: 2). Miss Trunchbull's intimidating nature appears 16 times in the novel, which is included in the sub sequence 10i, 12a, 16e, 17a, 17b, 17d, 17e, 17k, 18b, 18c, 20j, 21b, 22e, 26j, 26o, 29c. Miss Trunchbull's intimidating behavior will be explained as follows with citation evidence from sub-sequence 17k.

Excerpt 10:

*"Do you think she's mad?" Lavender asked. "Who?" "The Trunchbull." "No, I don't think she's mad," Matilda said. "But she's very dangerous. Being in this school is like being in a cage with a cobra. You have to be very fast on your feet."*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988: 99)

This quote describes Miss Trunchbull's bullying through the perspective of Lavender and Matilda who compared her to a cobra, a deadly animal with dangerous abilities and sudden aggressive attacks. Matilda's statement *that being in this school is like being in a cage with a cobra* showed that the students, including herself, feel an aura of threat that must always be watched out. This is in line with the definition of intimidating by Anikin (2024:2), namely as a perpetrator who uses domination to cause fear of others. Without any direct action, Lavender and Matilda's reaction explains how Miss Trunchbull manages to bring out the dominance that affects the tension of the school state in accordance with the antagonist character stated by Pickering & Hooper, (1981: 25) that the antagonist is the character who creates conflict for the protagonist character.

In the next sub sequence, namely sub sequence 21b, when Miss Trunchbull tests Rupert's multiplication ability. Through the analysis of this quote, Miss Trunchbull shows her intimidating nature which emanates from the terrifying aura and pressure on Rupert. Here is the explanation for sub sequence 21b.

Excerpt 11:

*The Trunchbull started advancing slow and soft-footed upon Rupert in the manner of a tigress stalking a small deer. Rupert suddenly became aware of the danger signals and quickly tried again. "It's eighteen!" he cried. "Two sevens are eighteen, not sixteen!"*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:124)

The above quote clearly reflected the intimidating nature of Miss Trunchbull. Miss Trunchbull approached Rupert slowly and projected an aura of threat "in the manner of a tigress stalking small deer" a form of pressure that caused fear even before the verbal threat. This action is in accordance with the definition of intimidating by Murpghy (2014) and Anikin (2024) as a behavior that suppresses and controls others through fear, domination signals as well as implied threats. Rupert's response also showed that he was aware of "danger signals" so that it had an impact on his panicked actions. Miss Trunchbull's intimidating nature further confirmed her role as the antagonist in the story. Abrams and Harpham (2012) state that antagonists are the source of conflict in stories. While Baldick (2015) explains that the antagonist functions as an opposing force that magnifies the protagonist's obstacles. Through Miss Trunchbull's intimidation toward her students, Miss Trunchbull created inhibiting pressure for other characters that indirectly affected the protagonist's actions and development.

Sub sequence 22e showed Miss Trunchbull's intimidating nature, as she exerted pressure and implied implicit threats to Eric when he answers Miss Trunchbull's questions incorrectly. It is explained as follows.

Excerpt 12:

*In two large strides the Trunchbull was behind Eric's desk, and there she stood, a pillar of doom towering over the helpless boy. Eric glanced fearfully back over his shoulder at the monster. "I was right, wasn't I?" he murmured nervously.*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988: 127)

This quote clearly described Miss Trunchbull's intimidating nature. The way Miss Trunchbull moved quickly towards Eric and dominated to the point of being described as "a pillar of doom towering over the helpless boy" suggested a hint of domination and an implicit threat that created fear. This trait is in accordance with the definition of intimidating put forward by Murphy (2014) and Anikin (2024), namely the act of suppressing and controlling others through fear and indirect threats. Eric's frightened reaction to speaking nervously showed the impact of the strong pressure exerted by Miss Trunchbull. More than that, this trait also confirms her character as an antagonist in the story. With this trait, Miss Trunchbull causes pressure on her students. In addition, the emergence of conflicts and tensions that clearly hinder other characters, including the protagonist. This is in line with the statement of Morner & Rausch, 1998: 10 that the antagonist is the one who creates conflict and hinders the protagonist

### **Miss Trunchbull as a Malevolent Headmaster**

Malevolent is a malicious intention or desire that aims to hurt and harm others (Perchtold-Stefan et al., 2020; Szabó et al., 2022). This trait appears 5 times in sub sequences 12h, 12k, 20c, 22m, 23a. In the sub sequence 12k showed Miss Trunchbull's malevolent traits when Miss Honey tried to convince Miss Trunchbull that Matilda is a smart student, but Miss Trunchbull thinks Matilda is a naughty girl. Here is the explanation.

Excerpt 13:

*"What's more, they're much harder to squash. Squashing a bad girl is like trying to squash a bluebottle. You bang down on it and the darn thing isn't there. Nasty dirty things, little girls are. Glad I never was one."*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:73)

The above quote shows Miss Trunchbull's malevolent nature who expresses her desire to hurt girls. Defining them as dirty and proud to never be one of them. She compared girls to blue flies as pests that are easily destroyed, implying destructive intent that is physically as strong as well as emotional. This is in line with the definition of malevolent nature by Szabó et al., (2022) & Perchtold-Stefan et al., (2020) that malevolent nature is the intention to harm others. Miss Trunchbull's malevolent behavior in the above quote reinforced her character as the antagonist in the story. As an antagonist, the role of Miss Trunchbull is to create conflict or obstacles for the protagonist (Pickering & Hoeper, 1981: 25). Miss Trunchbull's malevolent traits is a threat to the students who make the school environment full of fear that triggered the protagonist to react to take action. In other words, Miss Trunchbull's malevolent nature is a negative trait that serves as a driver of conflict and clarified her antagonistic character.

Sub sequence 20c when Miss Trunchbull held a weekly test. Miss Trunchbull began her class with a hateful speech to the students that brought out her malevolent nature. Below is a further explanation of Miss Trunchbull's malevolent nature in sub sequence 20c.

Excerpt 14:

*"to think that I am going to have to put up with a load of garbage like you in my school for the next six years. I can see that I'm going to have to expel as many of you as possible as soon as possible to save myself from going round the bend."*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988: 118)

The above quote showed the malevolent nature possessed by Miss Trunchbull. Her remarks calling students "load of garbage" and her desired to "expel as many of you as possible as soon as possible" reflect her evil intentions and a conscious desire to hurt and harm others. This is in line with the definition of malevolent according to Perchtold-Stefan et al. (2020) and Szabó et al. (2022), which states that malevolent is an evil intention or intent that aims to harm and harm others. Furthermore, this trait further confirms his role as the antagonist in the story. Pickering & Hoepfer (1981) explain that the antagonist serves as a creator of conflict and obstacle for the protagonist, while Baldick (2015) emphasizes that the antagonist acts against the inhibition of the protagonist. With malicious intentions reflected in threats against her students, Miss Trunchbull created conflict pressure that hinders the development of other characters including the protagonist. Thus, this trait not only describes her personality but also strengthens her function as an antagonist who is the source of conflict in the story.

Sub sequence 22m shows Miss Trunchbull's malevolent nature as Matilda said her last name is Wormwood. Miss Trunchbull revealed a bad review after buying a car at Mr. Wormwood. Below is a further explanation of the 22m sub sequence.

Excerpt 15:

*"...The whole thing was filled with sawdust! The man's a thief and a robber! I'll have his skin for sausages, you see if I don't!"*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988: 132)

The 22m quote shows Miss Trunchbull's very strong malevolent nature. Her expression full of anger because her car did not match what Mr. Wormwood said. Phrases such as "The Man's a thief and a robber" and "I'll have his skin for sausages" indicated her evil desire to hurt others. This statement fits the definition of malevolent as malicious intent that seeks to harm others (Perchtold-Stefan et al., 2020; Szabó et al., 2022). Moreover, through this trait Miss Trunchbull's function as an antagonist is clearly visible. Miss Trunchbull threatened to ensure Matilda's behavior while at school. Miss Trunchbull's actions are in line with those explained by Pickering & Hoepfer (1981) that the antagonist is the one who plays the role of creating obstacles for the protagonist.

### **Miss Trunchbull as a Cunning Person**

According to Wen (in Suwastini, Utami & Paramita, 2024: 63) cunning is the power to deceive someone for personal gain. Miss Trunchbull demonstrates this cunning nature in several parts of the story, where her actions reveal deliberate attempts to mislead or control others. Miss Trunchbull showed cunning traits 6 times in sub sequences 16th, 17j, 26f, 26g, 26k, 26o. In sub sequence 17j, Miss Trunchbull's cunning nature indirectly emerges through Matilda and Lavender's conversation. The following is an explanation of Miss Trunchbull's cunning nature that appears in sub sequence 17j.

Excerpt 16:

*"And that is the Trunchbull's great secret." "Never do anything by halves if you want to get away with it. Be outrageous. Go the whole hog. Make sure everything you do is so completely crazy it's unbelievable."*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:99)

The above quote is a quote from Matilda that indirectly describes Miss Trunchbull's cunning nature. Cunning is the ability to deceive others for personal gain. Miss Trunchbull showed this trait through a calculated way of thinking and acting. An indirect quote by Matilda's dialogue *"And that is the Trunchbull's great secret. Never do anything by halves if you want to get away with it. Be outrageous. Go the whole hog. Make sure everything you do is so completely crazy, it's unbelievably,"* reveals Miss Trunchbull's strategy in maintaining her power and authority at school. Miss Trunchbull's cruel actions were a deliberate form of her ingenuity. Using extreme and crazy behavior as a tool of manipulation so that others are afraid and confused so that they do not dare to question her actions. By acting beyond reason, Miss Trunchbull managed to deceive the surrounding environment and achieve her goal. In addition, this trait strengthens the function of Miss Trunchbull as an antagonistic figure. As stated by Abrams & Harpam (2012:11), an antagonist is a character who is in conflict with the main character as well as a source of problems in the story. Miss Trunchbull consistently hinders Matilda's development by creating a creepy school atmosphere. Through cunning coupled with extreme actions, Miss Trunchbull becomes a major obstacle for Matilda and the other students.

One of clear examples of this can be seen in sub-sequence 26k, which is explained through Miss Honey's story to Matilda. Here's a further explanation.

Excerpt 17:

*"Well," Miss Honey said, "when I got my teacher's job, the aunt told me I owed her a lot of money. I asked her why. She said, 'Because I've been feeding you for all these years and buying your shoes and your clothes!' She told me it added up to thousands and I had to pay her back by giving her my salary for the next ten years. I'll give you one pound a week pocket-money," she said. 'But that's all you're going to get.' She even arranged with the school authorities to have my salary paid directly into her own bank. She made me sign the paper."*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:163)

The quote clearly shows Miss Trunchbull's cunning as opposed to Miss Honey's. Miss Trunchbull took advantage of Miss Honey's circumstances to gain her personal advantage of money. Miss Trunchbull agreed to take care of Miss Honey since childhood as a family, but she has other intention. She took advantage of Miss Honey's helplessness and manipulated her by declaring her sacrifice, Miss Trunchbull demanded an unreasonable payment and even arranged Miss Honey's salary directly into her account. This clearly showed Miss Trunchbull's cunning trait of taking advantage of others for personal gain and this behavior with the definition of cunning stated by Wen's (in Suwastini, Utami & Paramita, 2024: 63). Miss Honey's story about her situation triggered Matilda's desire to fight, becoming one of the reasons to use her power against Miss Trunchbull. Indirectly becomes the main driver of the storyline as an antagonist.

Furthermore, Miss Trunchbull's cunning trait appear indirectly through Miss Honey's story to Matilda regarding her father's will. Below is a further explanation of sub sequence 26o.

Excerpt 18:

*"But my aunt produced a piece of paper supposedly written by my father saying that he leaves the house to his sister-in-law in return for her kindness in looking after me. I am certain it's a forgery. But no one can prove it."*

(Dahl, Matilda, 1988: 166)

The above quote clearly reveals Miss Trunchbull's cunning nature in manipulating circumstances for personal gain. In Miss Honey's confession, it is seen that Miss Trunchbull deliberately forged documents to seize the inheritance rights of Miss Honey's father's house. This act reflected the definition of cunning according to what Wen (in Suwastini et al., 2024: 63) conveys, namely the ability to deceive others for one's own interests. Miss Trunchbull committed fraud by carefully calculating and fully aware of the loopholes in. This event triggers Matilda's desire to fight her. Making Miss Trunchbull fulfils her function as an antagonist. According to Abrams & Harpam (2021:18), antagonists are the main source of conflict that hinders the development of the protagonist. In the case of Miss Trunchbull's contents, it succeeded in triggering Matilda's desire as the protagonist to fight. Thus, through this trait, Miss Trunchbull emphasizes her function as an antagonist in the story.

### **Miss Trunchbull as a Discipline Headmaster**

Discipline refers to the trait of a person who obeys rules, including training others by using punishment to correct non-compliance (Utami et al., 2020:123). Miss Trunchbull's discipline traits appear 10 times in sub sequence 11b, 12k, 16g, 16h, 18e, 19a, 19b, 20a, 20d, 29a. Although Miss Trunchbull is filled with bad qualities, this discipline is one of her positive traits, even though she implements it with excessive violence that causes deviations to become negative characters. Here is an excerpt from sub-sequence 12k.

Excerpt 19:

*"Not another word!" shouted Miss Trunchbull. "And in any case, I have a rule in this school that all children remain in their own age groups regardless of ability. Great Scott, I'm not having a little five-year-old brigand sitting with the senior girls and boys in the top form. Whoever heard of such a thing!"*

(Dahl, Matilda, 1988:76)

This quote describes the strict rules at school by Miss Trunchbull. The rules to require students refused Miss Honey's request to move Matilda to the upper class, this was evident from the sentence that shouted *"Not another word!"* reflects her adherence to the existing rules and demands that Miss Honey comply with them. In accordance with the definition of discipline by Utami et al (2020:123) which states that discipline is an obedient trait while training others to obey rules. Miss Trunchbull's insistence on rules reflects a high commitment to consistency, but this action creates obstacles for smart students like Matilda. Without listening to Miss Honey's explanation, he instead accuses Matilda of being a nosy naughty girl. This emphasizes his character as an antagonist and with this trait becomes the beginning of the emergence of conflict.

In sub sequence 16b the nature of Miss Trunchbull's discipline is explained indirectly by Miss Honey's explanation

Excerpt 20:

*"A word of warning to you all," Miss Honey said. "The Headmistress is very strict about everything. Make sure your clothes are clean, your faces are clean and your hands are clean. Speak only when spoken to. When she asks you a question, stand up at once before you answer it. Never argue with her. Never answer back. Never try to be funny. If you do, you will make her angry, and when the Headmistress gets angry you had better watch out."*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:113)

Miss Trunchbull's disciplined trait was reflected in Miss Honey's warning. This warning showed that Miss Trunchbull demanded absolute adherence to the school's rules, from cleanliness and body posture, to the prohibition of arguing or joking. In accordance with the definition of discipline according to Utami et al (2020:123), discipline is not only related to compliance with rules, but also includes the act of training and correcting non-compliance through punishment. Miss Trunchbull's rules are one-sided and accompanied by threats that create fear. Her disciplined attitude accompanied by extreme punishment strengthens her position as an antagonist. In accordance with the opinion of Abrams & Harpam (2012) and Baldick (2015) that the antagonist is a character who is the main source of conflict and hinders the development of other characters. In this case, Miss Trunchbull along with her extreme rules and punishments become a force to hinder the freedom and development of students, including the main character.

In sub sequence 20d, Miss Trunchbull's disciplined nature appeared when she inspected the classroom and inspected Nigel.

Excerpt 21:

*"Now put your hands out in front of you. And as I walk past I want you to turn them over so I can see if they are clean on both sides." The Trunchbull began a slow march along the rows of desks inspecting the hands.*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:119)

Sub sequence 20d showed that Miss Trunchbull applied very strict and detailed rule. She not only set hygiene rules but also supervised them directly. This inspection act sent discipline as a behavior control that emphasizes compliance as explained by Utami et al. (2020) non-compliance leads to punishment or abusive treatment. This did not stop at the inspection, Miss Trunchbull then spoke harshly and condescendingly to Nigel. This attitude strengthens Miss Trunchbull's position as an antagonist. According to Abrams and Harpam (2012) and Baldick (2015), an antagonist is a character who is a source of conflict and hinders other characters. In this scene, Miss Trunchbull creates conflict through excessive discipline and punishment.

### **Miss Trunchbull as a Sturdy Person**

Miss Trunchbull is described as a sturdy character in the novel. The sturdy traits appear 19 times in sub sequences 10h, 12d, 16e, 16g, 16h, 17a, 17b, 17d, 17g, 18g, 18j, 20e, 21c, 22f, 23g, 26k, 29b, 29g, 29m. She fulfill what Shiffrin (2004: 846) explains that sturdy is a strong figure both physically and personally. This trait is one of Miss Trunchbull's positive traits but is implemented rudely so that it deviates into a negative. In sub sequence 21c Miss Trunchbull showed her sturdy trait by lifting Rupert's hair using her giant hand.

Excerpt 22:

*She took a firm grip on Rupert's long golden tresses with her giant hand and then by raising her muscular right arm, she lifted the helpless boy clean out of his chair and held him aloft. Rupert yelled. He twisted and squirmed and kicked the air and went on yelling like a stuck pig, and Miss Trunchbull bellowed, "Two sevens are fourteen! Two sevens are fourteen! I am not letting you go till you say it! "From the back of the class, Miss Honey cried out, "Miss Trunchbull! Please let him down! You're hurting him! All his hair might come out!" "And well it might if he doesn't stop wriggling!" snorted the Trunchbull. "Keep still, you squirming worm!"*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:124)

Sturdy refers to a figure who is physically strong while having a dominant personal character. This is evident in the description of Miss Trunchbull's action of *"taking a firm grip"* and lifted Rupert with one hand using her muscular arms. Miss Trunchbull's physical strength is portrayed in an extreme, confirming her physical superiority over the students. Miss Trunchbull used her physical strength and authority to force Rupert to answer math questions, while ignoring the victim's cried of pain as well as Miss Honey's pleas. Her actions show a strong, unempathetic, and authoritarian personal strength. This attitude emphasizes Miss Trunchbull's position as an antagonist. In line with Abrams and Harpham (2012) and Baldick (2015), antagonists are characters who are the main source of conflict and hinder the development of other characters. In this scene, Miss Trunchbull creates conflict through the abuse of physical force causing fear, suffering, and insecurity for the students.

Miss Trunchbull sturdy traits appear in sub sequence 22f. In this sub sequence, Miss Trunchbull punished Eric by pulling his ears until his body is lifted.

Excerpt 23:

*"I haven't started yet," the Trunchbull said briskly. And now, taking a firm grip on his two ears, she lifted him bodily out of his seat and held him aloft. Like Rupert before him, Eric squealed the house down. From the back of the class-room Miss Honey cried out, "Miss Trunchbull! Don't! Please let him go! His ears might come off!"*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1998: 127)

Miss Trunchbull was able to lift Eric up just by grabbed both of his ears. This action showed incredible physical strength. In addition, Miss Trunchbull's personal strength is evident in her cold and unempathetic behavior, as seen in her words, *"I haven't started yet,"* implying a further threat. She continues her actions even though Miss Honey begged for Eric's release, this is in accordance with Shiffrin (2004:846) definition of sturdy, which depicts a physically strong figure as well as having dominant personal strength. Strengthening Miss Trunchbull's function as an antagonist. In line with Abrams and Harpham (2012) and Baldick (2015), antagonists are characters who are the main source of conflict and hinder the development of other characters. In this scene, Miss Trunchbull created conflict through excessive and intimidating use of force, causing fear and suffering in students and hindering the creation of a safe learning environment.

The following is an excerpt that explains the sturdy nature of Miss Trunchbull through sub-sequence 29g.

Excerpt 24:

*In two strides the Trunchbull was beside him, and by some amazing gymnastic trick, it may have been judo or karate, she flipped the back of Wilfred's legs with one of her feet so that the boy shot up off the ground and turned a somersault in the air. But halfway through the somersault she caught him by an ankle and held him dangling upside-down like a plucked chicken in a shop-window.*

(Dahl, *Matilda*, 1988:177)

The sub sequence above showed the great power of Miss Trunchbull. Her ability to successfully flipped a child into the air with a single kick showed how strong her physique is. Not only strength, but the ability to control movement control as if it was a common thing that she did often. Hanged Wilfred with one hand also really showed how strong Miss Trunchbull's hand muscles are. The sentence *like a plucked chicken in a shop-window* confirm that raising a child is not a difficult thing for her. This is in accordance with Shiffrin (2004: 846) statement that sturdy is a strong figure both physically and personally. Yet Miss Trunchbull's extraordinary powers were poorly implemented as a means of punishing students excessively. This power is a threat to all her students at school, making her an obstacle to the safety of other characters including the protagonist. Thus, Miss Trunchbull's physical strength, skills and steadfastness become a terrifying antagonist and play an important role in creating conflict in the storyline.

## CONCLUSION

Miss Trunchbull in the novel *Matilda* has a very important role in building the story. The result of this research not only identifies negative traits such as rude, authoritarian, arrogant, intimidating, malevolent, and cunning, but also shows that these traits function to create conflict that supports the development of the main character, Matilda. In other words, the antagonist is not only an evil character, but also an important element that helps deliver the message and values of the story. In addition, it can be seen that antagonist characters in children's literature have high complexity. Some traits, such as discipline and being sturdy, seem positive traits, but they become negative because they are used for personal interest and to control everything in a one-sided way. This shows that characters in literature can have a mix of traits, which makes the story more realistic and meaningful. It is expected that future researchers can analyze antagonist characters from other perspectives, such as feminism, psychology, or the ideology of female leadership power. Furthermore, comparative studies between several antagonist characters in children's literature can be conducted to find broader character patterns. Future research can also explore how readers understand and respond to antagonist characters in literature learning.

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