

A MOUSE'S COURAGE: THE CHARACTERIZATIONS OF THE BOY IN ROALD DAHL'S *THE WITCHES*

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ABSTRACT

Children's literature have been argued to positively affect children's development. This study aims to analyze the character of The Boy as the main protagonist character in Roald Dahl's *The Witches*. The researcher collected the data by using the method of close reading and note-taking. As the main protagonist in the novel, The Boy was described as cheerful, curious, brave, and intelligent. He was described to be optimistically move on with his life after his parents' deaths and after he was turned into a mouse. He was also a curious child, which lead him to investigate the witches' activity at the resort. As a brave and intelligent mouse, The Boy found tricks to tackle the Grand Witch and her army of witches. As a child who was turned into a mouse The Boy's characterizations enabled him to save other children from being turned into a mouse. These characterizations could inspire children and readers in general to be optimistic in facing life.

Keywords: Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, characterizations, children's literature.

INTRODUCTION

Roald Dahl is a famous English writer concerned with children's stories and short stories for adults (*Roald Dahl Story Company. About Roald Dahl*, 2018). According to Botherson (2009) in Hissan (2012), Roald Dahl's books were the top 100 kids' books in the National Education Association survey. His works that he wrote more or less amounted to about 35 books. According to Sudewo & Munandar (2013), Roald Dahl has been named one of the best children's story writers of the 20th century. Dahl's works have been analyzed widely from various perspectives and approaches, including feminists (Eveline, 2016; Jaber, 2016; Stauri, 2020), psychoanalysis (Bilalia, 2018; Erhart, 2017; Hadju, 2018; Sudewo & Munandar, 2013; Pangestu, 2019; Zatalini, 2018;), linguistics (Martens, 2015; Musita, 2016), their educational values (Priyono, 2017; Dhawan, 2017; Galvan, 2019), and how they are used for teaching (Huan, 2020; Janecek, 2014; Routel, 2009; Putri, 2018; Scriphachan & Scriphachan; 2018).

One of Roald Dahl's most famous works was *The Witches*. The novel has been adapted into feature films by WarnerBros twice, in 1990 and 2020 respectively, which reflects how much the films appeal to global audience. The two film adaptations took very different point of views, which is very normal shifts in the creative process of adapting a novel into the screen (Mellerszki, 2011; Suwastini, 2014). The novel itself was named one of the most influential children's book by BBC in 2019 (<https://thegreatestbooks.org/lists/194>). *The Witches* tells about a young boy who had to live with his grandmother after his parents' death in an accident, and then he was turned into a mouse by the Grand Witch, but he managed to kill the Grand Witch and the member her witch club in England, preventing other children of England to be turned into mice as well. In this novel, the name of the boy was never mentioned. However in its Warnerbros' film adaptation in 1990, the boy was named Luke in the credit, while in the 2020's adaptations by the same company, the boy was named Boy Hero in its credit whole

avoiding the whole naming altogether throughout the narrative (see, i.e., <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0100944/> and <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0805647/> for further information on the films adaptation). While In this study, the main character will be refer to as The Boy for analysis' sake.

Priyono (2017) has conducted a study on Dahl's *The Witches* in order to find the didactic values in the novel and revealed that the novel contained values of politeness, responsibility, obedience, preserverance, friendship, affection, tolerance, faith, patience, and cooperation. Eveline (2016) and Stauri (2020) took a different point of view on the novel and employed feminist perspectives. Eveline (2016) analyzed the possibility of transgression in the characterizations of the Grand Witch, the antagonist of the story, while Stauri focused on the gender politics underlying the novel. Dhawan (2017) chose to focus on the layers of political backgrounds in the novel and revealed that the novel includes three layers of politics, namely family, social, and cultural politics. The present study will approach the novel intrinsically, by focusing on the characterization of The Boy as the main protagonist of the novel. Characterizations is the revelation of a character in a story by giving certain behaviours, ways of thinking, and particular physical appearance (Gill, 1995; Kennedy & Gioia, 1995). Study of a novel's characterizations is argued to highlight insights about wisdom from the characters' development in the novel, from where teachers and educators can be inspired on using novels for building children's characters (Artini, Suwastini, & Utami, 2020; Dewi, et al., 2021; Hasby & Islami, 2020; Nurdayanti et al., 2020; Saraswati, et al., 2021; Suwastini, Asri, et al., 2020; Utami et al., 2020; Suwastini, Banjar, et al., 2020; Suwastini, Widasuari, et al., 2020; Yasamahadewi, et al., 2021). Similarly, the present study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of Roald Dahl's *The Witches* while providing highlights on The boy's positive characters. Since The Boy's life-journey changed him from a human-child into a mouse-child, his optimistic point of view about the change could inspire children and readers in general to find silver linings among the clouds in their skies.

METHOD

The subject of the research was Roald Dahl's *The Witches*. The novel was first published in 1983 by Jonathan Cape in the UK and by Frrar, Straus and Giroux in the USA. In the present study took the version published in 2016 by Penguin, Rbdom House, UK (Dahl, 2016). It consists of 22 chapters, and the total page for the novel's narrative in this version was 201 pages, including its illustrations. The object of the research was The Boy's characterizations as the main character in the novel.

The main instrument of the data collection and analysis was the researchers, assisted by filed notes. The study was conducted as a qualitative interpretive study employing McKee's (2003) textual analysis, where the main methods of data collection were close reading and note-taking. The first readings of the novel were aimed for gaining overall understanding of the novel. Further readings were combined with marking the parts of the novel that provide description of The Boy's characterization. Note-taking was conducted to record the descriptions of The Boy's characterizations from the novel. This step was continued with the categorizations of these characterizations, into general themes of the characters. And then, each of the characterizations was elaborated to provide proofs

of the characterizations from the novel, along with explanation how similar interpretation was concluded in previous related studies. This process supports the trustworthiness of the conclusion drawn from the interpretations of The Boy's characterizations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After repeated close reading was conducted on Roald Dahl's *The Witches*, the present study found four dominant characterizations of the main character, The Boy. They are cheerful, brave, curious, brave, and intelligent.

The Boy's Cheerful Characterizations

Roald Dahl's *The Witches* position The Boy as a main character who lost his parents during Christmas and then changed into a mouse, The Boy recovered from these tragedies very quickly. According to Ruch et al. (1996, in López-Benítez, et al., 2020), this predisposition to recover quickly after exposed to negative events is called a cheerful disposition. This disposition is strongly reflected in The Boy's characterizations when he lost his parents, when he was turned into a mouse, and when he reconsider his whole life as a mouse in terms of what he could do best about it.

In Chapter 2, "My Grandmother," The Boy described how he and his grandmother coped with the loss of the Boy's parents, which were also the grandmother's daughter and son in law. It was the day after the accident, and it was described that,

Excerpt 1 *"The very next day, so that we might try to forget our great sadness, my grandmother started telling me stories."*

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 8)

From Excerpt 1 above, it can be seen that The Boy stated that they had to "*try to forget our* [his and grandmother's] *great sadness.*" As The Boy admitted that their sadness was great, they were determined to recover from the sadness. The Boy explained that "[his] *grandmother start[-ed] telling* [him] *stories,*" as a way to forget their sadness. Because The Boy emphasized on the possessive pronoun "*we*" to refer to their sadness, that means the effort to get over this sadness was their effort together, highlighting The Boy part in the effort. In López-Benítez's et al. (2020) concept, The Boy's refusal to dwell longer on the "*great sadness*" is a reflection of his cheerful character.

The Boy's cheerful disposition was again highlighted was in Chapter 12, "The Metamorphosis" when he was changed into a mouse. The Boy was given five-hundred dosages of the Grand Witch's potion, thus he instantly became a mouse. The Grand Witch instructed the witches to catch and exterminate The Boy. Thus, he had to run for his life. He described his first experience of running away for his life after being a mouse as follows.

Excerpt 2 *“And quite amazingly, the pain had all gone now. I was feeling quite remarkably well. It is not a bad thing, after all, I thought to myself, to be tiny and speedy when there are a bunch of dangerous females after your blood.”*

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 111)

As described in the above excerpt, The Boy initially felt pain all over his body when he drank the poison formula. However, as he tried to escape the witches, he felt it was not so bad to be a mouse. In his words, *“I was feeling quite remarkably well”* as he recognized how easy it was for him to run when he was being a mouse. He appreciated that as a mouse he was tiny and he had a speed that was necessary for his survival. The way The Boy saw the incident was a remarkable positive mind if viewed from Guerin’s point of view (in Ermalina et al., 2015). He focused on the good things about being a mouse, instead of the bad things on not being able to be a human anymore. Similar perspective in looking at misfortune was identified to be reflected by the main characters in C.S. Lewis’s *Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in a study conducted by (Suwastini, Widasuari, et al., 2020) and in John Green’s *The Fault on Our Stars* in a study conducted by Patmarinata et al. (2016). In both texts, the main character was described to be cheerful because they put aside their sadness and choose to move on with life.

Later on, when The Boy met his grandmother as a mouse for the first time, he explained how he felt on being a mouse to her grandmother as follows.

Excerpt 3 *“...but the funny thing is that I don't honestly feel especially bad about it. I don't even feel angry. In fact, I feel rather good. I know I'm not a boy any longer and I never will be again, but I'll be quite all right as long as there's always you to look after me.” I was not just trying to console her. I was being absolutely honest about the way I felt. You may think it odd that I wasn't weeping myself. It was odd. I simply can't explain it.”*

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, pp. 119-120)

The excerpt above is The Boy's answer to his grandmother's question about what happened to him. The Boy expressed that he accepted what happened to him, by emphasizing that he was doing well with the changes. He stated that he did not *“feel especially bad about it”* and he did not *“even feel angry,”* about the fact that he had become a mouse. He went on to ensure his grandmother that he did *“feel rather good”* about being a mouse. And then, The Boy spoke as the narrator that he was *“not just trying to console her”* about all the positive emotions that he felt, emphasizing further that he was *“being absolutely honest”* that he felt good about being a mouse. By changing switching from a character talking to another character into a narrator talking to the novel’s readers, The Boy was ensuring the readers that he had accepted the fact that he was now a mouse and chose to be happy about it. The studies from Fasikh & Indriana (2022) and Am et al. (2017) revealed that a cheerful disposition can lead a character to accept his own conditions, and from this acceptance grew a more positive attitude about life that allows him to focus on better things in life than the negative events that had happened to them.

At the end of the novel, after The Boy had succeeded in conquering the High Witch, he and his grandmother was talking about what they should do next. It was on the last chapter, “It’s Off to Work We Go,” that The Boy found out that the Grand Witch’s death does not end the threat of other children from being changed into mice or other animals by the witches. His grandmother explained that a new Grand Witch would be appointed, and the witches would proceed with their wicked agenda. Upon finding this out, The Boy was very disappointed, fearing that he had “*become a mouse for nothing at all*” (Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 191). However, his grandmother had anticipated the issue, and she told The Boy that she had found out about the address of the Grand Witch’s headquarters. Together they planned to end the crimes of the witches by attacking the headquarters of the grand witch in a castle in Norway, and kill the the new Grand Witch and every witches in the world. Below is the excerpt from when they concluded their plan:

Excerpt 4 “*My grandmother picked me up off the table and kissed me on the nose. ‘Oh, my goodness me, we’re going to be busy these next few weeks and months and years!’ she cried.*
‘I think we are,’ I said. ‘But what fun and excitement it’s going to be!’
‘You can say that again!’ my grandmother cried, giving me another kiss. ‘I can’t wait to get started!’”

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 201)

Excerpt 4 above shows the excitement shared between the grandmother and the grandson, about changing the rest of their life together to hunt and exterminate evil witches from the world. As a mouse, The Boy had only several years left to live, while his grandmother who recently had very bad pneumonia attack had just about the same approximate time left. However, instead of mourning their loss of time, they focused on what they could do together to fill all the years left purposefully and meaningfully. The Boy is revealed as very excited about the plan, as he considered the tasks of hunting evil witches as “*fun and excitement.*” The Boy’s attitude reflects cheerful disposition because they decided to make the best of their situations (Suwastini, Widasuari, et al., 2020; Ermalina, Erupiddin, & Rahayu, 2015) and quickly moving on with their life purposefully (Fasikh & Indriani, 2022).

The Boy as a Curious Character

Curiosity is the psychological trait that affects a person’s need to seek information and experiences through self-directed behaviour (Kashdan et al., 2018). According to Pluck & Johnson (2011), curiosity facilitate learning process. In Dahl’s *The Witches*, The Boy was revealed as a curious child, because he wanted to know a lot of information and he asked a lot of question to get answers for those questions. Some of The Boy’s most important questions was about how to recognize a witch, the children who fell victim of witches, how long he would live as a mouse, about what happened to other witches after he defeated the Grand Witch in England, and he was curious about how to conquer the new Grand Witch in her castle in Norway.

Excerpt 5 “‘Are you really being truthful, Grandmamma? Really and truly truthful?’
‘My darling,’ she said, ‘you won’t last long in this world if you don’t know
how to spot a witch when you see one.’
‘But you told me that witches look like ordinary women, Grandmamma. So
how can I spot them?’”

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 8)

From excerpt 5 above, it can be seen that The Boy used repeated question “Are you really being truthful, Grandmamma? Really and truly truthful” showing his doubt towards his grandmother’s story. His curiosity was intensified even after his grandmother answer the question. The Boy tried to gain more information by asking “So how can I spot them?” referring to the witches that disguised themselves as ordinary women. As curiosity facilitate learning process (Johnson, 2011), the excerpt above shows that The Boy intended to learn about the witches to keep himself safe as the grandmother said “you won’t last long in this world if you don’t know how to spot a witch.” His self-reliant to gain information by asking to the grandmother reflects the curiosity traits mentioned by Kashdan et al. (2018). Similar exemplification of curiosity is related to gaining more information and revealing mysteries as presented by Bakti (2016) and Dewi et al. (2021).

The Boy curiosity was further highlighted in Excerpt 6 as shown below.

Excerpt 6 “‘Didn’t they search for her?’ I asked.
‘What happened to the other four children?’ I asked.
‘How, Grandmamma? How did they vanish?’
‘But how did they vanish?’ I asked.”

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 10)

The utterances above illustrate how The Boy is interested in the Witch's story. Suwastini et al. (2020) stated that the desire to ask questions is because of an interest in something he wants to know more broadly. He even constantly interrupts every sentence his grandmother speaks when telling stories with various questions. It was shown in the dialogue "How Grandmamma? How did they vanish?" He did not wait or let the grandmother continue the story directly. He kept spitting out what was on his mind in line with Bakti (2016) and Utami et al. (2020) who stated that frequent questioning on certain topic prompts one’s curiosity.

Excerpt 7 ‘Go on, Grandmamma,’ I said.
‘You told me there were five altogether. What happened to the last one?’”

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 6)

Besides being very curious, the boy is also a figure who can be said to be forcing. He always encouraged his grandmother to continue telling stories. He often said, “Go on, Grandmama.” It shows that he cannot wait any longer for the story to continue. When the grandmother was taking a little time to smoke, he told her to continue the story about the

Witch. The Boy's refusal to take a pause is similar to those curiosity value reflected in the characterization of Lucy Pevensie as identified by Suwastini, Widasuari, et al. (2020) where Lucy kept asking questions even those that are answered before, to get deeper information. Esianita & Widyawati (2020) also identified such characterization from Arthur in Aquaman movie who kept asking question due to his arrival in an unfamiliar place.

Later, when The Boy had turned into a mouse, he began to ask about a mouse life span as shown in excerpt 8.

Excerpt 8 "... *'How long do we live, us mice?'*

....

'If you really want to know,' she said, 'I'm afraid a mouse doesn't live for a very long time.'

....

'A mouse-person will almost certainly live for three times as long as an ordinary mouse,' my grandmother said. 'About nine years.'

'Good!' I cried. 'That's great! It's the best news I've ever had!'

...

'Because I would never want to live longer than you,' I said. 'I couldn't stand being looked after by anybody else.'"

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 188)

The utterances above in the excerpt was the grandmother's conversation. Elga with The Boy returned to Norway. The Boy asked how long a mouse could live. He asked again and again for the details, as shown in the line "how different and how much longer?" Even though the grandmother answered doubtfully, he was still curious about the information He was waiting for.

From the explanation above, The Boy is a curious child concluded from dialogues within the novel. When he wants to know something, he always insists on asking his grandmother. His curiosity remained so high even though he had turned into a mouse. Similar research on Amanda Collier's characterization by Dewi et al. (2021) found that when someone feels curious, they will start to interview someone to get detailed information. Previously, Suwastini, Widasuari, et al. (2020) also stated that Lucy Pevensie in the Narnia film has a curious character with her actions that are always determined to find new things more broadly.

The Boy as a Smart Mouse

Smart is a character where someone can totally do something. Solve problems with good planning. According to Salombe et al. (2013), intelligent people are inquisitive, organize or plan things well, has strong self-control, and also full of exciting ideas. The Boy is described as a smart boy. Even when he has turned into a mouse, he becomes a figure who is so ingenious with brilliant ideas. The smart idea from The Boy first presented in excerpt 9.

Excerpt 9 *“I decided to seek a safer place where I could carry on with the training. There must surely be an empty room in this enormous hotel. I put one mouse into each trouser pocket and wandered downstairs searching for a secret spot.”*

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 22)

The text above was The Boy's idea when he wanted to train the rats he had in a hotel. According to Hasby & Islami (2020) intelligent people have a broader mind than other people. He was on vacation with his grandmother in a hotel that forbade the existence of a mouse in it. The idea to put the mice in his trouser pocket was a clever idea for kids. He also thought about "seek a safer place" to find a safe place away from the crowds so that he would not be known to bring a mouse into the hotel. He found an empty ballroom to train two mice where he previously predict *“There must surely be an empty room in this enormous hotel.”* According to Utami et al. (2020), the ability to think logically accompanied with observant and creative ideas reflect one's intelligence. It is also reflected in The Boy's action in hiding the mice, looking a secret place, and utilizing his surrounding to his benefit.

The Boy's creativity to gain benefit was also identified in excerpt 10 when he ran away after turning into a mouse.

Excerpt 10 *“However, I wasn't going to wait for that. I was off across the platform like a streak of lightning! I was astonished at my speed! I leaped over witches' feet right and left, and in no time at all, I was down the steps and onto the ballroom's floor and skittering off among the rows of chairs. What I especially liked was the fact that I made no sound at all as I ran. I was a swift and silent mover.”*

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 110)

The description above is an excerpt showing that The Boy think quickly to take an action. The word “streak of lightning” emphasized how he managed to escape quickly with his flash idea shortly after being turned into a mouse by the witches. He did not need to think long to plan a way to run. He is very agile in taking advantage of the opportunities he has. Utami et al. (2020) mentions that effective and efficient decision making also a part of one's intelligence.

In excerpt 11, The Boy planned to consult his problem to his grandmother as shown below.

Excerpt 11 *"I suggest we both go first of all and consult my grandmother," I said. "She'll know exactly what to do." I moved towards the doors which were standing open. When we get out into the corridor," I said, "we'll run like mad. Stick close to the wall all the way and follow me. Do not talk, and do not let anyone see you. Don't forget that just about anyone who sees you will try to kill you."*

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 116)

The dialogue above is a conversation between The Boy and Bruno. It happened after the Witches turned them into mice. The Boy is telling his idea to be able to escape and go to the grandmother's room by saying, "go first and consult grandmother." He even told Bruno not to be caught by the hotel staff in detail. He instructs them to "run like mad" and "Stick close to the wall all the way" to ensure that no one will see them run. Hopefully, other hotel visitors could not feel their existence. In urgent situations, he can think well. Within a limited time, he can think things through to detail so as not to endanger them both in stepping to escape from the ballroom. The Boy's ideas from consulting to his grandmother, avoiding danger, and showing concern to Bruno is similar to the identification of Matilda who was full of ideas (Perkins, 2018). Meanwhile, The Boy who remembered his grandmothers room even his perspective was much different from that of a human indicated his strong memory, as mentioned by (Putriwana & Yustisia, 2021).

Excerpt 12 *"What an idea!" she cried. "It's fantastic! It's tremendous! You're a genius, my darling!"*

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 127)

Excerpt 11 contains Elga's praise for The Boy. The Boy has an idea to steal the poison potion from the Grand High Witch's room. Then he would steal it by descending from the balcony of his room to the room of the Grand High Witch. The Boy idea was unexpected for his grandmother. She even praised The Boy for it by saying, "It is fantastic! It's tremendous! You're a genius, my darling!".

Excerpt 13 *"I wasn't thinking of doing it in the Dining Room," I said. My grandmother stared at me. "My darling child," she said slowly, "I believe that turning you into a mouse has doubled your brainpower!"*

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, pp. 147-148)

The dialogue above is where The Boy tells his grandmother about the next idea to poison all the witches in the hotel at dinner. The Boy planned to infiltrate the hotel kitchen, where only a mouse can do it. It is the line of what his grandma said as proof that The Boy is brilliant "I do believe that turning you into a mouse has doubled your brainpower!". Here the grandmother realized that her grandson's grew smarter. Unexpected ideas from a 7-year-old boy just popped out of his grandson's mind, who had turned into a mouse. The Boy made plan and the execution was successful due to his good timing. The ability to

follow a plan thoroughly indicates a smart person (Blangsinga et al., 2021; Dewi et al., 2021).

Excerpt 14 displays the grandmother's compliment towards The Boy which in turn highlight The Boy's creativity.

Excerpt 14 *"You're a magician!" my grandmother shouted, starting to wave her stick about once again.*

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 199)

The dialogue above is The Boy's conversation with his grandmother when discussing the plans they would make in the future. They plan to enter the castle in Norway to exterminate the remaining witches. "You are a magician," The grandson's idea was highly praised by his grandmother. She felt her grandson was a genius. The discussions above it show that A boy is an intelligent person. He always has a brilliant idea for every situation they face in the story. Each of the plans that he did ran smoothly. It is also shown as the mission is complete to destroy the witches at the hotel. Dewi et al. (2021), Hasby & Islami (2020), and Salombe et al. (2013) found that the ability to think quickly is one of the advantages of intelligent people.

The Boy as a Brave Mouse

Kugel et al. (2017) and Rate et al. (2007) define brave as a trait of being fearless despite of the existence of pressure or threat. While being synonymous with courage and heroism, brave is related to taking dangerous action to gain desired result (Kugel et al., 2017; Rate et al., 2007). The Boy was described as a brave child. The Boy's courage was prominent, especially during the incident of his plan, his first encounter with a witch, his encounter with the frogs in High Grand Witch's room, and his attempt to put the potion.

The Boy's brave characterization was also identified when encountered a witch for the first time. He was fixing the roof of his tree-house when a strange woman approached him. Knowing how to differentiate a witch from an ordinary woman, The Boy recognized the strange woman was a witch. His reaction was described as,

Excerpt 15 *"Then I panicked. I dropped the hammer and shot up that enormous tree like a monkey. I didn't stop until I was as high as I could go, and there I stayed, quivering with fear. I stayed up there for hours, and I kept very still."*

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 39)

The excerpt in the story above describes a sense of panic experienced by The Boy when he met the witch. It was the first time he had seen the Witch. Even though he was panicking, he managed to escape. He said that he *shot up that enormous tree like a monkey*. He could even take advantage of the situation by climbing a higher tree. Dewi et al. (2021) stated that courage or bravery would come in a particular situation. A sense of courage remains in him even in situations that urge him. As taught by his grandmother, he

should avoid the witch at all cost. The line “*there I stayed, quivering with fear. I stayed up there for hours, and I kept very still*” represents his determination to keep himself away from the witch despite of his fear. In Rate et al. (2007) concept, The Boy’s action to stay safe in a dangerous situation is a reflection of being brave.

The Boy’s courageous act was identified later when he sneaked into the Witch’s room to steal the mouse-maker formula. While searching for the formula, he encountered three frogs which were there before him.

Excerpt 16 “*Three frogs came hopping out from under the bed staring at me with large black eyes. I stared back at them. I stood there clutching the bottle and staring at the frogs.*”

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 134)

The Boy entered the room of the grand high Witch to steal the formula for the potion. It was a very challenging and dangerous act. He even saw a frog in the Witch's room. "*I stared back at them*" shows that he faced the frogs boldly. He also found the Witch had returned to her room. But he did not let his guard down and looked for a place to hide himself. Despite of the fact that the witch had turned him into a mouse, The Boy remained fearless to enter her room and risked himself to run into her again. This interpretation is supported by Rizakiah et al. (2018), who found that a brave is a character who know the consequence or the risk of their action but still choose the chance to do it.

After stealing the formula, The Boy had to put himself in another danger to put the potion into the Witches’ meals. He was described to sneak into the kitchen as put in Excerpt 17.

Excerpt 17 “*I was, swinging to and fro upside down. It was terrific. I loved it. This, I told myself, is how a trapeze artist in a circus must feel as he goes swishing through the air high up in the circus tent. My trapeze (my tail) could swing me in any direction. Perhaps I would become a circus mouse after all.*”

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, pp. 156-158)

The excerpt above is what The Boy said when he was in the kitchen. He uses his tail to act to put a poison potion in the soup the chef makes for witches at dinner. He is courageous and even feels happy about the new things he can do. "It was terrific; I loved it," he said; taking a risky action is a courageous action that he loved to do. A similar character shown by Lucy Pevensie in Suwastini, Widasuari, et al. (2020) research, The courage of a lucy, while sitting on the back of Aslan the lion and the boy who dared to go to the hotel kitchen with himself as a mouse.

In planning a mission to destroy the witches, The Boy then had an accident. It happened in the kitchen when he tried to pour the poison recipe into the soup chefs make for witches at dinner. He was caught red-handed, and one of the chefs cut off his tail as it was described,

Excerpt 18 “Even as I fell, I knew just what had happened. I knew that the tip of my tail had been cut off and that I was about to crash on to the floor and everyone in the kitchen would be after me.”

(Roald Dahl, *The Witches*, p. 162)

The excerpt above describes the incident happening in the hotel kitchen. When The Boy's body changes into mice, he continues the mission to pour the poison formula into the witches' soup. In the sentence " *I knew that the tip of my tail had been cut off,*" proves that The Boy had sacrificed his tail to fulfil his mission. Meanwhile, the line “*everyone in the kitchen would be after me.*” implies the danger awaiting for The Boy. However, The Boy managed to pour the potion into the Witch’s soup making him accomplished his mission. He was not sad and forgot the incident immediately. It is mainly shown when his grandma said, "*just try to forget about it,*" and changed the topic of the conversation to how the plan was done. He immediately switched topics by discussing the mission he had successfully carried out with his grandmother. He even asked for his place to be able to see the witches to his grandmother by saying, "*could you put me where I can watch them?*” It highlights his main concern was the plan to destroy the witches. The Boy’s action which put himself in danger for the sake of achieving goals complies with the definition of physical bravery as presented by Kugel et al. (2017) and Rate et al. (2007).

CONCLUSION

The Witches is a novel that tells the story of a boy who is bewitched into a mouse. Previous research examined educational characters, while the present research focuses on the prominent character of the protagonist, The Boy. Four characters stand out from the boy, namely, curious, intelligent, cheerful, and brave. The boy always looks enthusiastic and curious about the story of the Witches conveyed by his grandmother, Elga Eveshim. He even often forced his grandmother to continue the story about the Witch every day. Then, The Boy is described as an intelligent child even when he turns into a mouse. Brilliant ideas to destroy wizards he can come up with so quickly from his little brain. He is also a figure who is so tough in dealing with the realities of life when he loses his parents, turns into a mouse, and even loses his tail. He does not dwell in sadness, and he can carry himself or support himself by being grateful for his current situation. The Boy is brave boy. He has very little fear for his age. He dared to enter the chambers of wizard leaders worldwide to steal the poison formula. The results of the study show where the character can make The Boy the main protagonist, achieve the goal of the story to fight the witches themselves. This latest research only focuses on The Boy's character as the main protagonist. Future research expected to be able to dig deeper or more broadly about other elements in *The Witches'* novel.

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