

The Fantastic Chocolate Factory: Analysis of the illustrations

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we will analyze the illustrations and the work of illustrator Quentin Blake in *The Fantastic Chocolate Factory*, from the perspective of the experience of semiotics, since the observer is also an agent, participating in the process of construction of meanings. The functions of children's literature in the cognitive development and in encouraging the development of the child's learning and knowledge of the world were addressed, as well as how the works are characterized, primarily, for this audience, with their own and so vivid aesthetic characteristics. The analysis of the illustrations allowed the verification of their remarkable artistic-aesthetic value, which, in the reading process, expands the possibilities of meaning construction, in addition to giving color and form to the verbal.

Keywords: Roald Dahl, Quentin Blake, Illustrations.

INTRODUCTION

Literary works aimed at children are more than a simple play on words or images that intersperse the pages and entertain young audiences. These works have a profound allusion to the progress of the child's knowledge, as well as the way he sees himself in his inner and outer world. The aesthetic values of the works are immersed in rhymes that bring sonority, musicality; in images, which bring the richness of visual beauty that, many times, speak for themselves, due to the full semantic load existing in each illustration, awakening a look that is not only curious, but that, if well worked, can lead the child to a world full of new horizons and learning.

Roald Dahl (13 September 1916 – 23 November 1990) was a Welsh-born British writer of Norwegian parents. He achieved notoriety in the 1940s for his works for adults and children and became one of the most acclaimed writers in the world. He is mainly known for his children's books, among which are *The Fantastic Chocolate Factory*, *Matilda*, *The Witches*, *The Good Giant Friend* and *James and the Giant Peach*, works adapted for the cinema.

During his years at Repton Repton School in Derbyshire, the *Cadbury* chocolate factory occasionally sent boxes of their new products to the school for pupils to taste, which served as the

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inspiration for him to write *The Fantastic Chocolate Factory*. He was fascinated to imagine that there must be rooms in chocolate factories where real inventors tested and experimented with their creations.

Dahl was by far best known for his very particular and unique approach to children's literature. Certain elements in his books are easily attributed to his ugly boarding school experiences during his youth: villainous and terrifying adults in positions of power who hate children, precocious and observant children as protagonists and narrators, school settings, and a lot of imagination. Despite being famous for writing for children, Dahl's sense of style is notoriously a unique hybrid of the whimsical and the macabre. It's a distinctly child-centred approach, but with a subversive undertone to its obvious warmth.

The details of the villainy of its antagonists are often described in childish but nightmarish detail, and the comedic topics in stories like *Matilda* and *The Chocolate Factory* are intertwined with dark or even violent moments. Gluttony is a particular target for Dahl's violent retribution, with several notably fat characters in his canon receiving disturbing or violent endings.

The children's literature book can be characterized by the presence of illustration associated with the word. *The Chocolate Factory* is a children's book written in 1964 and first published in the United States by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. in 1964 and in the United Kingdom by George Allen & Unwin, eleven months later, illustrated by British author Quentin Blake.

In this article we will analyze the illustrations and the work of the illustrator of the aforementioned work, which have an artistic-aesthetic value that, in the reading process, expands the possibilities of meaning construction, in addition to giving color and form to the verbal. From this analysis, the illustrations are analyzed from the perspective of the experience of semiotics, since the observer is also an agent, participating in the process of constructing meanings.

THE ILLUSTRATOR AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Quentin Blake is one of the greatest illustrators in the world, with books published in many different countries. He has created drawings for more than three hundred books and was Roald Dahl's favorite illustrator.

The style of Quentin Blake's illustrations is unmistakable. He owes his success to his sense of humor and the lightness of his stroke. In each project, his approach is shaped according to the tone of the book and the nature of his characters.

On his *website*, the author talks about his technique. He states that, although his drawings have a free style and no rules, looking like they were made on the spur of the moment, each drawing, no matter how simple it may seem, requires planning and preparation. He claims, most of the time, to make an outline where he studies the posture of the characters, what kind of expression they will have, and the



composition of all the elements on the page. For a sequence of drawings within the context of the book, more planning is required, and the illustrator should ask himself:

- Is the method and technique of these drawings appropriate to the atmosphere of the book?
- What will be illustrated on each page? Is there continuity between actions from one page to another?
- Do the characters look the same on every page?

To combine planning and spontaneity, he experimented with various techniques, but the one that has been the most successful, and the one he has been using for the last 30 years, is the use of the lightbox.

The light-table technique can be described as follows: on the light-table, he places the sketch that will serve as his base and, on it, a sheet of watercolor paper, usually *Canson* or *Arches*. On hand should be a bottle of waterproof black India ink and quill nozzles of different types, from thin and flexible to wider and stiffer, as well as brushes or whatever seems most suitable for the job.

The important thing about this technique is not to repeat what is drawn in the sketch. In fact, it is important that you cannot clearly see what is drawn under the paper, so the line is more spontaneous, as if you were drawing for the first time, but with the advantage of knowing all the elements that should appear and where they should be positioned. Usually he starts with the hardest part of the drawing, because if something goes wrong, you don't have to redraw everything again. But still, he considers it normal to make up to two or three versions of the finished drawing and then decide which one seems to be the best or most consistent in relation to the whole book.

From the selected illustrations, one can appreciate a range of different techniques and materials used, including watercolors and pastels, to create his unmistakable illustrations.

The very passages he chooses to illustrate emphasize his decisions and the existence of selective criteria, whether in the characterization of a scene never portrayed by another artist who has illustrated the same work, or in the continuation of a representative tradition: the illustrator is an interpreter of the text (SCHWARCZ, 1982, p. 104).

In addition, the illustration reflects the trends of the cultural moment in which it is held.

CHARLIE BUCKET (P. 13) AND CHARLIE AND HIS GRANDPARENTS (P. 41)



Although it is a playful story, Dahl's narrative teaches some lessons in relation to early childhood education, presenting considerations about the importance of the posture and conduct of parents and the consequences that certain behaviors can cause in the life of the minor.

The narrative begins in the year 1970 with the story of Charlie Bucket, a poor boy who lived in a small town and lived in an old house along with his parents, grandfathers and maternal and paternal grandmothers, all elderly people in fragile health. At that time, the Bucket family was experiencing great financial hardship and food deprivation.

The illustrations show the physical characteristics of the protagonist and his family, extremely haggard, fragile and vulnerable. Still, this illustration performs an expressive function, in which, according to Camargo, "illustration can communicate a feeling, an emotion. These can be expressed mainly through the movements and facial expressions of characters, and through graphic resources that begin to convey certain feelings" (CAMARGO, 1998, p. 36).

AUGUSTO GLUPE (P. 34) AND VEROCA SAL (P. 36)

The first golden coupon was found by Augusto Glupe, according to the author, a boy as fat as an inflated balloon, his body was full of folds of lard and his face was a ball of dough with two little eyes squeezed, which looked at everything, full of gluttony.



The second coupon had been found by a little girl named Veroca Sal, a spoiled girl who had very rich parents and lived in a big city, far away from the factory.



The author, in his book, not only deals with the formation of character, but also addresses the care of children's health, such as obesity, with the cut of childhood obesity – portrayed in the character Augusto Glupe, the greedy boy who shows us how bad it can be to go so thirsty to the pot; and the behavioral problems of Veroca Sal, the girl who had everything she wanted and of course, never learned to be

satisfied with it, presenting severe difficulties in understanding and respecting limits, which entails several physical and psychological consequences.

In the images above, illustration plays a key role, creating new perspectives and saying what was not said by the verbal text. It performs a descriptive function, as the description present in this function can be made faithfully to the characters extracted from the text, or they can characterize the characters from the imaginative perspectives of the illustrator.

In these images, the illustrator took care to playfully describe the traits of the children who won the golden coupons. The image does not appear on the sheet of paper, it will exist for a purpose. In this sense, the work with illustrations requires mastery of the visual code and the formal resources for image construction, as each detail inserted in the text will serve to sharpen the reader's imagination.

ONLY CHARLIE REMAINED (P. 161)



Driven by the bad behavior, each of the children were lost during the tour, Charlie was the only one left, thus becoming the winner of Wonka candies and chocolates for life.

But that's not all. Seeing in Charlie the same charm he felt for that particular sweet world, Mr. Wonka decides to give him the factory. That is, when he was old enough, he would be the owner of the largest and most fantastic chocolate factory in the world.

Quentin Blake makes good use of palettes, especially the contrasts of warm and cold colors, to define an emotional state of the characters in question.

Here, the illustration is not limited to giving shape to a character, but does so from a playful and polysemic perspective. Therefore, illustration is a way for the illustrator to reveal, in line with the author's text, his worldview, but in this construction there is always room for the reader's interaction, who integrates his own worldview into the book – Charlie Bucket, the only child who lives a simple and humble life, teaches that we don't need much to be happy.



Even aimed at children, *The Fantastic Chocolate Factory* is a work that seduces and entertains all audiences for its imaginary grandeur and social lessons, valuing family, character, unity and humility as the most valuable prizes a child can have.

As John Harthan (1981, apud PEREIRA, 2008) concludes,

[b]ook illustration is like a hand-mirror in which one can see reflected great historical events, social changes and the movement of ideas down the centuries. How an artist illustrates his text tells us something about the manner in which he and his contemporaries regarded themselves. And the choice of texts for illustration in different periods is itself significant, indicating changes in the climate of thought.³

In children's books, illustrations are often considered mere decorative elements, serving only as an aid to words. As a result, the participation of these images in the construction of stories is reduced, if not completely ignored.

First, it is important to clarify the definition of illustration. For the Association of Graphic Designers, this can be an image whose purpose is to "corroborate or exemplify the content of a text in a book, newspaper, magazine or any other type of publication" (ADG, 2000, p. 59). In the Aurélio Dictionary (2007, p. 01) we find: "illustration: image or figure of any nature with which the text of books, pamphlets and periodicals is adorned or elucidated". However, its attributions can go much further, and it can also be considered an image that expands a verbal text, that adds information to it, that questions it, that replaces it (as in picture books), or even its starting point.

According to Camargo (2006, p. 13),

the illustrations do not explain or embellish the text; Nor do they translate the text, they do not seek equivalences between the verbal and the visual. More than coherence or convergences of meanings, it seems that it is a collaboration of the various verbal and visual discourses, constituting a double discourse, a dialogue.

In the history of illustration there is no date that officially marks its beginning. Supposedly, both illustration and writing appeared in prehistory, through cave paintings. Documentary illustrations and the first illustrated scrolls appeared in Egypt. Later, illustration acquires a descriptive and objective function, being used by the Greek and Roman civilizations in scientific areas, mainly in topography, medicine and architecture. Nowadays, illustration has also acquired an aesthetic function, especially in children's literature, where it gives it a playful, real, unreal character, of dreams and fantasies, showing that the illustrated literary book allows the child to encounter what only he understands.

³ The illustration in the book is like a hand mirror in which one can see reflected great historical events, social changes, and the movement of ideas over the centuries. The way an artist illustrates his text tells us something about the way he and his contemporaries regarded themselves. And the very choice of texts for illustration at different times is significant, indicating changes in the climate of thought.

In children's books, illustration had its rise and recognition from Perrault's fairy tales, published in 1697. These fairy tales were illustrated in black and white by Gustave Doré. Their main characteristic was the richness of details. Driven by Perrault in England in the nineteenth century, the Brothers Grimm published *German Popular Stories* with illustrations by George Cruikshank, full of humor and rhythm. Still in the nineteenth century, the first publications of works with illustrations made through special effects (pop-up) appear. The greatest illustrator in this category was Lothar Meggendorfer.

In the twentieth century, the illustrations of the re-editions of the Brothers Grimm's classics, made by Arthur Rendak, Edmund Dulac and Key Nielsen, deserve to be highlighted, as they represent a great appeal to fantasy and children's imagination. The end of the century is marked by a large number of new illustrators. Among them, there are numerous different styles, showing how the expansion and innovation of graphic resources has provided professionals with new possibilities for creation.

Ângela Lago (2006, p. 01) reminds us that "verbal language is not translatable into visuals. They are two different ways of thinking", that is, not everything that is expressed in words can be translated into images, and the opposite is also true. Camargo, sharing the same opinion, says that "just like the verbal text, the visual text also requires a kind of literacy – or [...] visual literacy" (CAMARGO, 2006, p. 13, emphasis added). Therefore, the illustrations have their own "vocabulary", which also needs to be learned in order to be "read" and "understood".

It can be said that illustrators of children's and young people's literature are led by the expression of drawing that branches into different strands, structuring itself as a language in its more utilitarian or more artistic gradations. This language, when it manifests itself in illustrated books, brings a visuality that has different origins, but we can establish two main milestones: first, the imagery of fables and fairy tales and, later, the humor and nonsense poetry that is presented in children's literature.

Illustration is a kind of what Vilém Flusser calls "imagic thinking" and depends on predetermined points of view, based on technical and marketing conventions. Due to these characteristics, the images of books tend to re-signify images of the world for children, emphasizing a narrative aspect of the image, an inversion of its traditionally descriptive nature.

Perry Nodelman in *Books about Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*, points to two kinds of irony of the relationship between words and images in the picture book due to the inherent differences between verbal narration and pictorial representation: "The first is the distance between the relative objectivity of images and the relative subjectivity of words; the second is the distance between the temporal movement of the stories and the eternity usually fixed in the images."

This irony, referred to by Nodelman, is established by the interplay between narration and description, where images and texts are related, changing their traditional characteristics to expand the poetic possibilities of the book object. Thus, the characteristic of the visual language of the illustrated



book for children is established from the set of images that come from the memory articulated by the illustrator subject in relation to the text. The art of illustrating differs from the language of painting, since the images are more easily inclined to the mental verbalizations constituted by the human tendency to give meaning to what we see through a sequence of images.

As discussed during the course "Literature and Other Semiotic Systems", children's storybooks are most commonly found in larger and finer measures.

Rounded or curved shapes, for example, cause the sensation of softness and cuteness (NODELMAN, 1988, p. 72), as is the case with Quentin Blake's illustrations. They are predominantly communicative drawings that provide us with an immediate understanding, traced with clarity of shapes and with similar intensities of lines and color.

Throughout the work, the non-filling of closed areas in the figure, for example, emphasizes the line over the form and creates the sensation of movement (Charlie's smile) – hence the idea of vigor and its effectiveness in illustrating the action (NODELMAN, 1988, p. 69-70). Here, Nodelman (1988, p. 53) also considers the issue of white spaces: for him, when around the drawing, these spaces act as frames, isolating the figures and drawing attention to them – in this case, Charlie's grandparents.

In turn, colors have emotional connotations (NODELMAN, 1988, p. 59-67); and, because they are culturally ingrained — since they are perceived differently in different cultures (SEGALL, CAMPBELL, HERSKOVITS, 1966, p. 37-38) — they are able to multiply the "states of mind" with which the work is received.

The primary colors, which are found in pure form and not through the mixture of any other. Secondary colors, which are obtained by mixing two primary colors. And tertiary colors, which are the mixture of a primary color with a secondary color.

We can also classify warm colors and cool colors. The first groups the spectrum from yellow to pink, and the second from green to purple. Therefore, the palette used must be thought out precisely.

Different colors are able to convey different sensations to the viewer and thus manage to accentuate a sensation or emotion that is intended to be conveyed. It is also able to point out the mood of a scene and even the emotional state of a character.

All colors have their two sides of the coin: a color does not always convey only positive or only negative sensations. They depend on the chosen context and are greatly supported by other colors in the palette of the scene.

Quentin Blake uses warm colors to generate excitement, so they highlight intense emotions such as passion, joy, sensuality, violence, madness, and even revenge. In addition, they do not receive this classification for nothing, these colors also convey the idea of warmth.



Cold colors, on the other hand, when used by Quentin Blake, point to more introspective feelings, such as sadness, loneliness, depression, calm, and passivity. And, as opposed to warm colors, they are able to cool the scene.

Just like verbal language, which can take on more than one function within the text, illustrations can also be found in different functions, in the visual text. However, in the vast majority of works, there will be a function that will exert greater dominance, although all of them are capable of activating the reader's imagination for a particular aspect, raising questions, curiosities and imaginations. In the work in question, we observe the existence of more than one illustrative function, with which we will work from the images themselves. As you would do:

When the text of children's books consists of only a few sentences, illustration acquires a relevant role in structuring the narrative. It must therefore be carefully analyzed in its sequences and scenes, in the representation of the characters and their expressions (personal, action, etc.). in the details of space and time so that the children can fully follow and master the story and the forms that are narrated. (FARIA, 2008, p. 82)

THE FUNCTIONS OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: AESTHETICS AND PEDAGOGY

When discussing the work "Literature and the formation of man", by Antonio Candido (2002), it is assumed that literature is configured as a modality that functions, more specifically, as a portrait of the universal need for fiction and fantasy, coextensive with man, since it invariably appears in his life, whether man belongs to a group or characterizes himself as an individual being. Literature will be side by side with the most inherent and elementary satisfactions of its spectrum. It is from this universal need, whose most humble and spontaneous forms of satisfaction are configured, even in puns and guesses, that popular narratives, folk tales, legends, myths emerge at a complex level. Antonio Candido also emphasizes that all this – emphasizing the universal needs in the cycle of civilization – culminated, in a certain way, in the dissemination of poems, novels, and more specifically short stories, in printed forms, disseminated in pamphlets, books, newspapers and magazines. Correlating these universal needs, the author evokes the idea that the deepest layers of our personality, in a way, can suffer a powerful bombardment of fictional creations that we read and that act, not only consciously and unconsciously in terms of the way we perceive them, but also in a non-evaluative way. Antonio Candido describes that, perhaps, folktales, illustrated stories, detective novels, etc., act as much as the school and the family in the formation of a child and an adolescent. And it is from these statements that the author himself inquires whether literature has a formative function of a pedagogical type.

Depending on the writer, literature can form, but not according to the official pedagogy, which usually sees it, ideologically, as a way of linking what one has as the True, the Beautiful and the Good, precisely defined according to the interests of the predominant popular groups, for the reinforcement of



their conceptions of life. Antonio Candido boasts that literature acts with the indiscriminate impact of one's own life and educates like it. It has an integrating and transforming function in the link between literary imagination and the concreteness of the world, and it is from this that ambivalent attitudes arouse moralists and educators, fascinated by the literary humanizing force and, at the same time, fearful of its indiscriminate richness. It is also in the work that the author explains the pedagogical and stylistic meaning of the literary function. For him, a large number of myths, legends, and tales are etiological, that is, a figurative or fictitious way of explaining the appearance and *raison d'être* of the physical world and society.

For this reason, according to Antonio Candido, there is always a curious relationship between the explanatory imagination, based on science, and the fantastic explanation, based on the writer's perspective. Thus, still based on the work "Literature and the formation of man", literature as an opportunity for enrichment and experience is paramount in the formation of the individual and the citizen, as well as in their cognitive development. Antonio Candido points out that if, on the one hand, the reading of a literary work can be an instrument of domination, on the other hand, it is an instrument of citizenship, allowing man to build his own within society. Starting from this plan, focusing more specifically on children's literature, the child, who comes into contact with literary works from a very early age, will have a greater understanding of himself and of the other, even linked to his inherent creative potential and the breadth of horizons of culture and knowledge.

The power of fantasy is glued to the human imagination, especially children's, and it is from this that the power of aesthetics is formed and shines. Taking into account the approach of Maria Zaira Turchi (2004), in the work "The aesthetic and the ethical in children's literature", the works that underpin children's literature needed to receive very constant characteristics in their exhibitions: the drawn figure, the colors, the illustration, the image. And it was from these characteristics that the dialogue between the verbal text and the aesthetic standard became a constant.

In the work "Children's Literature – Child's Voice", by Maria José Palo and Maria Rosa D. Oliveira (2006), it is stated that children's literature redirects us to a conception of the term "being childish", using it as a qualifier that specifies a certain species within a broader and more general category of the literary phenomenon. The authors, in the course of the text, specify that the act of speaking to the child is, in fact, seeking not a class, but a minority that, like others, does not have the right to a voice, does not dictate its values, but, on the contrary, must be guided by the values of those who have the authority to do so: the adults, who are, According to the composers of the work, who have the essence of knowledge and experience enough for society to grant them the function of conductors of those beings who know nothing and, therefore, must be passive to them, and thus assume such a position: children.



The authors elucidate that in an unquestionable and natural way a bond is established between the dominant and the dominated. According to them (together with the approaches used in the classroom as explanations), the dominant (adult) *versus* the dominated (child) relationship, respectively: the one who knows *versus* the one who does not know; the one who has the right to voice *versus* the one who does not have the right to a voice. It can be seen that there is a hierarchical level in this established relationship, and it is common for adults to think that children are only intellectually inferior human beings, and they are often underestimated.

The book *The Fantastic Chocolate Factory*, by Roald Dahl, refers to the aesthetic and pedagogical idea of the illustrated work, deserving to be highlighted the fact that the child's voice, in this work, as an example, integrates sonority, visuality and meaning, based on the existing pun game to instigate the child's intelligence and creative sensibility, confronting, once again, the idea of abstract thought versus concrete thinking, at the levels of dominator versus dominated, adult (the one who is only seen as a transmitter of knowledge) versus the child (only passive learning). For the writers referenced, there is no more faithful description of the way in which the child's thought that gives rise to the child's voice in children's literature operates: as far as possible from conventional associative habits and closer to a thought that gives voice to concreteness, inclusive and motivated.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Nothing beats the magic of finding and knowing the true story of the *Fantastic Chocolate Factory*, idealized by Roald Dahl, with all the peculiarities of his writing. The graphic planning of the children's book is a very important resource for the reader to understand the literary work.

In this article, we focus on the objective of pointing out how the illustrations contribute to the formation of new perspectives or reiteration of the text written by Dahl. Blake's illustrations gain importance in the book and are no longer considered simple decorative elements.

In *the Fantastic Chocolate Factory*, the graphic and visual exploration basically consists of the construction of illustrations, full of meanings, with the exploration of shapes and colors, which allow the reader, from visual perceptions, an encounter with imagination, dream, fantasy and real life, showing that it is possible to combine fiction and reality in a literary work. The graphic resources used in the work contribute to the child's enchantment, in addition to attributing to it aesthetic and literary value.

Therefore, in the analysis of illustrations, no detail of the image construction can be ignored, and all elements need to be related: colors and shapes, distribution of figures on the page, graphic design and its relationship with the content of the narrative. In mixed works (text + image), it is essential to verify what relations the image establishes with the word.



The analyzed work presents significant opportunities for study. Behind each of the illustrations there are real tangles of meanings, and it is essential to adopt a more critical look to perceive the magical world that passes through them.



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