Chapter 8
Roald Dahl’s *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*
as a School Reading: Comprehension, Experience, Metaphor, Emotion

Dorota Mariola Michulka
*University of Wrocław, Poland*

**ABSTRACT**

This chapter aims to develop a new analysis formula and a new language of literary school education/teaching literature, especially the language of reading engagement functionalized in terms of emotional, social, and cultural needs that literature is capable of satisfying. This applies also to young readers. The starting point is the specificity of emotional and sensory reception of literary narration (e.g. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by R. Dahl) in which vivid, multisensory mental imagery absorbs/engages many readers (also on the principle of intersubjective cooperation). Discussion in this chapter is based on three issues: transactional theory of reading response (with aesthetic and efferent reading); individual, personal, and private interpretations; and analysis of types of affect in reception. It also proposes a description of the process of pupils’ cognitive activities, recognize mental images, understanding metaphors, and express emotions.

**INTRODUCTION**

Emotional reception, reading engagement, and empathic reading, which are strongly associated with the individual reading experience, needs, mental images, and conceptual metaphors, affect our communication. Many academic papers about school reading raise the issue of “literary emotions”, but only a few discuss “emotional reception” (Galda, 2005; Koziołek, 2016; Miall, 2011; Oatley, 2002; Paivio, 1991; Rembowska-Pluciennik, 2016; Rosenblatt, 1995; Van Peer, 2013). According to Maryl, “Among...
justifications for empirical literary research one may find one common element — the attempt to change
the focus of literary studies from academic knowledge to pragmatism, i.e. what impact literature has on
an individual” (2013, p.1), including young readers, e.g. primary school students.

BACKGROUND

Involvement in reading can have an impact on the reader’s identification with the fictional world and
the protagonists inscribed in it. This process is clearly visible thanks to the strong interaction between
words, images, and emotions, an interaction which allows not only the creation of new meanings and
the development of imagination, but also challenges the reader to feel compassion towards the world
rather than merely describe it. The project described in this chapter relates to the study of the impact of
empathic reading on the recipient.

Reading Engagement and the Emotional Aspect of Reader Responses

The starting point of the present study is the specificity of emotional and sensory reception of literary
narration, using as an example a fantasy story: Roald Dahl’s *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964),
in which vivid, multi-sensory mental imagery absorbs and engages readers on the principle of inter-
subjective cooperation. The theoretical framework is based on three key issues: (1) transactional theory
of reading response, which is connected to “life-to-text” and “text-to-life” strategies; (2) the theory of
aesthetic and efferent reading; and (3) how empathic reading relates to self-reference in the context of
the individual, personal, and private interpretations of a particular reader (Galda & Cullinan, 2005; Mi-
all, 1988; Rossenblatt, 1995). My analysis of the impact of empathic reading on the recipient also takes
into account the following set of features: (1) *text* is not only a linguistic, but also a poly-sensory and
multimodal category; (2) the text is not “ready-made”, but a reflection of the multi-sequential character
of the reading process; and (3) the reading process is not only medial interaction, but also an interactive
process of perception, thus the text is not an object, but rather a projection of the reader’s mind (Rem-
bowska – Pluciennik, 2009).

The main challenge of the present research is the description of the synergy between reading expec-
tations and reading literature at school. This idea of synergy is supported by a definition of committed
reading, which helps to understand reading as enjoyment and satisfaction and perceive literary text as
“animated” and “personal”. The study requires a special attention to the world of each individual reader,
in order to analyze how his/her life experiences, personality traits, existential need to read, external ref-
erences and inner reactions influence the reading process. A special emphasis is placed on the network
of relations between symbolic elements and mental images resulting from intuitive reading, the range
of possibilities (Langer, 2000), the horizon of expectations (Jauss, 1970), and the creative mind-reading

The potential benefits of recognizing the reader’s visualization, which is a variant of mental imag-
ing, are presented as a significant contribution to the linguistic understanding of a literary work. For
the purpose of this study, the term *reader response* is used with the meaning given to it by cognitively
oriented research on the reception of literature. As Rembowska-Pluciennik argues,