

ROALD DAHL ON FILM

MATILDA

USA/1996/98mins/PG
Dir: Danny DeVito With: Mara Wilson, Pam Ferris, Danny DeVito

We asked young film fans to describe their favourite Roald Dahl adaptations.

Matilda was a book by Roald Dahl, an extremely clever writer. He wrote lots of very imaginative books for children, but adults like them too! Matilda was written in 1988, and was made into a film in 1996, which was directed by Danny DeVito, who also played the part of Mr Harry Wormwood.

Matilda is a very clever girl, but her family are really rotten. They don't appreciate how special she is, and all they like doing is watching TV. Matilda really wants to go to school, but her father thinks it would be a waste of time and money. She teaches herself lots of skills, like cooking, and finds a love of books when she goes to the library. One day, Matilda discovers that she has special powers. When she is angry or upset, she can make things happen by thinking about them, like blowing up the TV when her father tears pages out of her book.

One day Mr Wormwood, who is a cheating car salesman, sells a vehicle to Ms Trunchbull, a fierce-looking school headteacher. They agree that Matilda can go to her school. Matilda is delighted by the news, but Ms Trunchbull rules the school like a prison. She throws one of the girls by her pigtails, and puts children in the dreaded Chokey. However, Matilda's teacher is the opposite of Ms Trunchbull; Ms Honey is kind and generous, and she loves teaching the children. She sees how special Matilda is, and decides to help her.

Matilda gets tired of being treated badly by her family and Ms Trunchbull, and decides to play pranks on them, to teach them all a lesson. For example, she switches her father's hair oil with her mother's hair dye, and he ends up with bright blond hair! When she learns that Ms Trunchbull is Ms Honey's wicked aunt, who has



CHAPTER



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cheated her out of her family home, she resolves to get rid of the gruesome headteacher once and for all! In the end, she uses her special powers to terrify Ms Trunchbull, so much so that she runs away, never to be seen again. A little later, Ms Honey adopts Matilda, which her family are only too happy for, and they live together happily ever after.

Lots of imaginative things happen in this film, and I like the way that it shows children that not all adults are nice, but they don't have to put up with their meanness. All the characters are really different, and that makes the film interesting. I like Ms Honey the most, because she is so kind and understanding (everyone should be like her!). I think that she understands how Matilda feels because of her own experiences, and she made me think about being considerate to others. I really like Mr Wormwood too, though, because he does lots of funny facial expressions. In fact, I think all the parts were well acted, and even the bad characters were funny in a way. I really, really like the pranks that Matilda plays, they are very creative, and show off her powers and talents. My favourite was when she put superglue in Mr Wormwood's hat! I also like that everything works out for Matilda in the end, and I think the film has a positive message for children who are unhappy.

The way that different places are shown in the film told me a lot about how Matilda felt about them. For example, Ms Honey's quaint cottage is beautifully bright and cheerful looking, whereas Matilda's house looks really trashy, and the school is gloomy and darkly lit.

I think the film is funny, but also very dramatic. The scene where Matilda and Ms Honey sneak into Ms Trunchbull's mansion and are almost caught is particularly full of suspense. It had my heart pumping and I was on the edge of my seat! I would say that overall Matilda is a comedy film, but it has some scary moments. The film has a couple of important messages. It shows that even if you are unhappy, if you stand up to bullies, things can get better. Another main theme is the importance of helping others, and that good things will in the end happen to good people.

At the moment, I'm doing the play version of Matilda at school (I'm playing Matilda!). The play is very different to the film, and it's hard to do some of the things that happen in the film on stage. This is because the film relies on special effects to make some of the magic things happen, like the little blonde girl flying through the air when Ms Trunchbull throws her by her pigtails. The film also has a much bigger cast and uses more props than we are using at school, which means the film feels more realistic.

I love this film, because I think it captures the imaginative and magical spirit of Roald Dahl's book. If I had never seen a film adaptation of a Roald Dahl story, this one would make me want to watch more. I would recommend Matilda to people who like lots of action and who like fantasy and comedy films.



Elsa Walker
(Age 9 ¼)