The Metaphor

Everyone has a different view point on life, one’s perception can significantly impact the way he/she views the rest of the world. In the short story, “The Metaphor,” written by Budge Wilson, the reader is introduced to protagonist, Charlotte. In seventh grade, Charlotte had a teacher, Miss Hancock, who inspired her to write for fun. Miss Hancock has a way with words and inspired her students to love writing. The author gives away information on Charlotte’s life at home and what her relationship with her mom is. Her mom doesn’t like Miss Hancock too much and tries to persuade Charlotte that she’s not a great teacher. When Charlotte moves to a different school, for senior high, it is revealed that her tenth grade teacher is the one and only, Miss Hancock. Things change that year, none of the students like Miss Hancock the way they used to in Junior High. Charlotte shuts out Miss Hancock by going along with what her peers say, and following the crowd. The story takes a turn for the worse; when Miss Hancock gets hit by a school bus and dies. Charlotte suffers an internal conflict, she regrets treating her the way she did, which is not wanting to talk in fear of what the other students would think. Her mom doesn’t help too much with that, she says what happened to her teacher was completely normal and shows no sympathy for Charlotte or Miss Hancock. Even though they were complete opposites, both Miss Hancock and Charlotte’s mother really influenced Charlotte greatly by their completely different personalities. The main message to this story is that, individuals should realize that their opinions shouldn’t be influenced by others.

The completely different personalities of Miss Hancock and Charlotte’s mother both rubbed off on Charlotte and influenced who she became. Miss Hancock’s personality was very lively, she always encouraged Charlotte to do her best and constantly reminded her whenever she could that she had a real talent. Miss Hancock motivated Charlotte to continue writing metaphors and it is because of her that Charlotte enjoyed English class. As evidenced on page 66, “But it was in that area of composition, in her creative writing class, that Miss Hancock made the deepest mark upon me. She had that gift of making most of us want to write, to communicate to make a blank sheet of paper into a beautiful or at least thing.” In this quote we see how much Miss Hancock really supported her students and taught them that school is fun and enjoyable. She speaks with lots of enthusiasm and hand gestures, which keeps her kids intrigued. Charlotte’s mother, on the other hand, obviously plays a huge part in Charlotte’s life, needless to say that Charlotte looks up to her as a role model and obeys her wishes. This is proven by Charlotte’s metaphor for her mom on page 68, “My mother is a flawless, modern building, created of glass and the smoothest of pale concrete. Inside are business offices furnished with beige carpets and gleaming chromium.” While Miss Hancock treats Charlotte with nice, encouraging words, Charlotte’s mom is very strict at home; she described her mother as a “white picket fence- straight, level”. (Pg. 72) She is known for being very straightforward and sophisticated. The author provoked the fact that she wasn’t very sympathetic towards Charlotte’s feelings. When Charlotte needed her mother the most (when Miss Hancock died) she left her to figure it out by herself and didn’t give her as much love or attention that she was seeking.

Everyone has their own, different way of presenting themselves. Each individual is unique in his or her own way. Miss Hancock, for instance, is a very extravagant woman, not the average woman you see everyday. She gives all her attention to Charlotte and constantly encourages her to be the best she can possibly be. She lives a bold lifestyle and doesn’t let any obstacles come in her way. Page 65, “Miss Hancock was plump and unmarried and overenthusiastic. She was fond of peasant blouses encrusted with embroidery, from which loose threads invariably dangles.” Charlotte’s mom, for one, hated the way Miss Hancock presented herself, she would tell Charlotte that “Her head covered with a profusion of small busy curls, which were brightly, aggressively, golden in a bad taste,” “like the rest of her.” Not much was given away on the way her mom dressed but on terms of uniqueness, her mom taught Charlotte to be caring, she looks up to her because she respects her mother and learns everything from her. Even though Charlotte thought highly of Miss Hancock in grade seven, her mom always shot Charlotte’s opinion on her teacher down. When Miss Hancock died, all Charlotte’s mom said was that it was completely normal, when Charlotte was bringing herself down and blaming herself for her past actions, her mom left her be and said “She’s 16 years old. It’s time she learned how to cope.” (Page 79) In the seventh grade, Charlotte was herself; she never cared if she was given the title “pretty” or “cool.” She didn’t care about fitting in and didn’t change her opinion due to others. However in Senior High, the tenth grade, Charlotte was taking on the image of her mother, pretty and proper. She betrayed Miss Hancock in the sense that she ignored her, in fear of what the students would think when they saw her talking to Miss Hancock.

Thirdly, Charlotte’s environment also had a major effect on her. The environment at school compared to her life at home. To start off with Charlotte’s mother, she liked to keep the house very tidy and spotless. Also, at home, Charlotte’s mom didn’t respect her opinions on Miss Hancock and always spoke negatively of her at the dinner table. Proven by the conversation they had one night, “Overdone, too much enthusiasm. Flamboyant. Orange hair,” is how she chose to refer to the teacher. (Page 71) Therefore, Charlotte was never able to express her feelings to her mom without having it shut down. When Charlotte came to her mother, feeling guilty about what happened to Miss Hancock, she replied with, “If you would examine this whole, perfectly natural situation with a modicum of rationality, you would see that she got exactly what she deserved.” She never supported Charlotte’s enthusiasm for literature. Miss Hancock on the other hand, tried her very best to connect with Charlotte again in the tenth grade, but because she was scared of the other students’ opinions, Charlotte never wanted to converse and have a friendly relationship. The atmosphere in the classroom obviously played a big part in Charlotte’s life because it was the students that made her feel unsafe and uncomfortable. The author makes it seem like Charlotte enjoyed going to school more then being in her quiet home.

Individuals should realize that others shouldn’t influence their opinions. Miss Hancock was clearly judged a lot throughout the story line and this impacted her life. When Miss Hancock passed away, Charlotte regretted not taking the time to speak to her and hear her out. Both Miss Hancock and Charlotte’s mother had influenced her life in many different ways and taught her many things/lessons in life. Charlotte learned to be caring, to speak her mind, and not judge others by Miss Hancock and her mom.