Who should have more influence on a child; the mother or a teacher? Most would assume the mother, but not in all cases. This is from the short story The Metaphor by Budge Wilson. It is about a girl named Charlotte who learns the metaphor from her teacher Miss Hancock. Then, the bond between the two strengthens and the bond between Charlotte and her mother is introduced. So, let’s ask the question again: how could a teacher more influence a child than their own mother?

Firstly, Miss Hancock helps to free Charlotte and to express her thoughts, whereas her mother makes Charlotte conceal her thoughts. When Miss Hancock introduced metaphors to her English class in grade 7, it empowers Charlotte. She quickly learns how to use metaphors in a way that most people her age wouldn’t have been able to do. Charlotte used the metaphor to explain her mother in a way that was unlike everybody else in the class. This is proven by these quotes: “The result, when we read them out to her were, as one might expect, hackneyed, undistinguished, ordinary.”, “the one I wrote for my mother is awfully long. You probably don’t want to write all this stiff down.” The first shows how everybody else’s was normal. But with the second quote, we can assume Charlotte’s metaphor is very long, and it is. Charlotte now uses it in her daily life, normally to dis her mother in a different way. On the other hand, when Charlotte comes home weeping about Hancock’s death, her mother tells her to stop being a baby and stop crying. By doing so, this is proof that the mother doesn’t want Charlotte to express her feelings too freely. This is proven by the following quote: “Leave her alone, Arthur. She’s 16 years old. It’s time she learned how to cope. She’s acting like a hysterical child.” This shows how the mother wants Charlotte to conceal her feelings. Also, when Charlotte first talks about Miss Hancock to her family, the mother seems emotionless and unsatisfied. The following quote proves this: “Oh,” said my mother, without emphasis of any kind. “Her. Charlotte, would you please remove the dishes and bring in the dessert?” This shows how the mother conceals her *own* feelings.

Secondly, the story makes us assume Miss Hancock cares more about Charlotte than her mother. When Charlotte first writes the dark metaphor about her mother, Miss Hancock genuinely worries. She asks Charlotte if anything’s wrong, which Charlotte doesn’t understand. Even after Charlotte says it’s fine, we can see she still worries, but she conceals it to Charlotte by using her trademark humour. This following quote shows this: “is there anything you would like to discuss about your mother’s metaphor?” This shows the worry in Miss Hancock, who normally doesn’t talk in a soft, quiet voice. The mother also has her moments where she seems to care for Charlotte, but those moments are very minute and do not appear as often. When Charlotte comes home crying, her mother does ask her what is wrong and tells her to explain everything as if to comfort her. In the following quote, her mother asks, “What on earth is wrong, Charlotte?” asked my mother when she saw my stricken look, my heaving shoulders. There was real concern in her face.” However, it disappears right away when she realizes it was Miss Hancock. After Charlotte explains the string of events, her mother then says, “For goodness’s sake, Charlotte,” said my mother, quiet but clearly irritated, “don’t lose perspective. She couldn’t keep order and she only had herself to blame.” Her care for her daughter is overrun by the hatred she has towards other people, which isn’t the best way to comfort someone.

Lastly, Miss Hancock has more positive change to Charlotte’s life than her mother. When Miss Hancock introduced the metaphor, it’s all Charlotte can think about. The following quote proves this: “But it was in the area of composition, in her creative writing class, that Miss Hancock made the deepest mark upon me.” Right off the bat, she has an incredible metaphor about her mother. Then, when she takes a bath, when she writes in her notebook, when she just walks, the metaphor is part of her life. This is another quote that Charlotte had said: “Miss Hancock may have been in poor taste, but at that time in my life she was my entry to something I did not fully understand but which I knew I wanted.” This shows the wonder and love that Charlotte has for the metaphor. But her mother wants Charlotte to change in her own ways. However, these changes are normally just daily life lessons, and do not impact Charlotte’s life in such a big way. The moment when Charlotte’s home is introduced, we can see the tidiness of the mother. The following quote proves this: “The hall table was polished, antique, perfect.” Then she finds a note that says, “At a children’s Board Meeting. Home by 5. Please tidy your room.” These quotes prove the tidiness and the organization of Charlotte’s mother. However, when Charlotte goes to tidy her room, we can see that only “A few magazines were piled on the floor beside my bed. On my dresser, a T-shirt lay on top of my ivory brush and comb set. Two or three books were scattered over the top of my desk.” There isn’t much things that mess her room, yet the mother thinks a few objects scattered is still messy. The definition of ‘tidy’ of the two people do not match up, so these life lessons taught by her mother may seem a bit forced to Charlotte.

At the beginning, we asked the question: how could a teacher more influence a child than their own mother? Now we know it’s possible if the teacher is the one that creates more positive changes to the child’s life than the mother. When Miss Hancock introduced the metaphor, it impacted Charlotte’s life so much that Charlotte mentioned it multiple times in the story. Her mother on the other hand, did not have many events that Charlotte wanted to mention multiple times. Because the teacher was able to create more positive memories than her mother, Miss Hancock was able to take the love of Charlotte, which also led her to changing and impacting her life.