

Rachel Smid

Miss Hancock vs. Charlotte's Mother

October 16, 2019

# A Birthday Cake or a Modern Building?

Cold and controlling or warm and flamboyant?

Cold and controlling or warm and flamboyant? How different are they truly? In the short story *The Metaphor* written by Budge Wilson, Charlotte, a young impressionable girl with a love for literature is inspired to write metaphors by her grade 7 teacher Ms Hancock. She starts by writing one about her mother, how clean and organized she is. Later Charlotte goes to high school where Ms Hancock unexpectedly is. Charlotte chooses to ignore her teacher which she soon regrets after Ms Hancock is hit by a bus and dies. How can two women with such different personalities be similar? Charlotte was drawn to both of them for their different characteristics which may have been what they had in common.

Ms Hancock inspired Charlotte with her love for metaphors and everyone around her. Ms Hancock was described to be encouraging and kind with the added effect of bright, colorful clothes, "She was fond of peasant blouses encrusted with embroidery, from which loose threads invariably dangled." Clothes with lots of mesmerizing details (p.65). Described by Charlotte Ms Hancock was someone who always supported and helped the people around her, "Like a heavy bird, she fluttered from desk to desk, inspecting notebooks making suggestions, dispensing eager

praise.” (p. 65). The students continued to find Ms Hancock intriguing, for her subject matter and her bright clothes. Others like Charlotte’s mother were not fond of the flamboyancy and style of Ms Hancock. To Charlotte’s mother, Ms Hancock was, “that brassy Ms Hancock” which is not a very nice term (p.71). Over the course of the story Ms Hancock changed with the people around her, adapting to the changing opinions of her students. In the beginning she had lots of energy as well as enthusiasm which was accepted and loved by the students. But by the end, “Week after week, she entered the room white with tension and left it defeated.” Ms Hancock had become low energy, she lost her spark (p.78).

Clean, organized, critical, unlike Ms. Hancock Charlotte’s mother was all those things, “she never acted frazzled or rushed or angry.” ( p.73). Charlotte followed after her mother, always remembering to clean up after herself. Charlotte’s mother “ranted and raved about her cleanliness.” Keeping their house pristine, organized and clean. Attention and love were hard to come by in Charlotte's home. Her mother was preoccupied and encouraged her father do let Charlotte be even when Charlotte was grieving over the death of the teacher she felt she had abandoned. She thought it would be best to “Leave her alone,” “she’s a 16 year old. It’s time she learned how to cope.” ( p.79). Charlotte learnt how to be tough from her mother.

Evidently, Charlotte’s mother is greatly different from Ms Hancock, yet it is how they influence Charlotte that makes them similar. They were both roll models for Charlotte while Ms Hancock encouraged Charlotte to love school, literature and metaphors, Charlotte’s mother encouraged Charlotte to love cleanliness, order and organization. Charlotte’s mother encouraging Charlotte to be strong and to fend for herself. Especially after Ms Hancock died, she was mildly harsh in the way she spoke to Charlotte by saying, “ Charlotte. Do please blow your

nose and try to get hold of yourself. I can't for the life of me see why you are so upset." Causing Charlotte to feel worse and less valued (p. 79). Ms Hancock encouraged Charlotte to face the world with an open mind and a pen to write metaphors, yet Charlotte's mother encouraged Charlotte to face the world with skepticism and a broom to clean.

There are always similarities no matter how hard you must look to find them, Ms Hancock and Charlotte's mother could not be more different. Yet, Charlotte is the one who gave them there similarities. They both influenced her life in very different ways. Teaching her how to be the best version of herself. "Ms Hancock was a birthday cake," and "[charlotte's] mother is a flawless modern building." (p.80) (p. 80)