

MADNESS IN LITERATURE (WITH REFERENCE TO THE VICTORIAN & EDWARDIAN ERA)

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes to conduct a survey among a universe of roughly 100 people (between the ages of 15 and 40) with three novels as subtopics.

An online questionnaire has been prepared and circulated among the subjects. This questionnaire will test the subject's awareness, favor (if present), mental image and perception of the characters.

Keywords: *Characters, Edwardian, Literature, Mad, Victorian*

1. INTRODUCTION

It is important to note that through the centuries, the perception of madness has changed; mental illness and its consequent narratives weren't always liked.

What interests students of Literature are these questions:

'Why are there 'mad' characters? What purpose do they serve in the book/poem? Do the readers actually like these characters?'

This project, by way of recording readers' response to characters in three different texts; Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* (Bronte), The Mad Hatter in *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland* (Lewis Carrol) and Gollum in *Lord Of The Rings* (Tolkien), attempts to analyze the effect that a 'mad' character has on the reader.

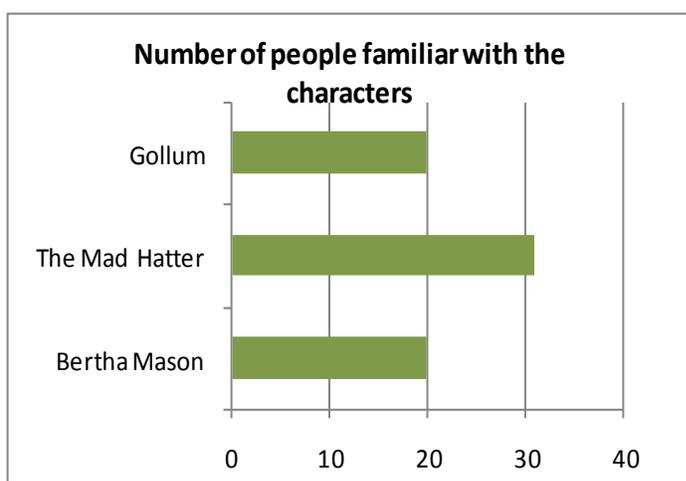
2. METHOD

An online questionnaire was prepared and circulated among 50 respondents. The subjects (who ranged from ages 15 to 40) were given a time period of ten days to fill in the questionnaire, which contained easy, straight-forward questions. The topic of the paper was not revealed, and the perception of the subjects regarding the given characters was tested at the end of the questionnaire, with a question asking them about the relation between all the given characters.

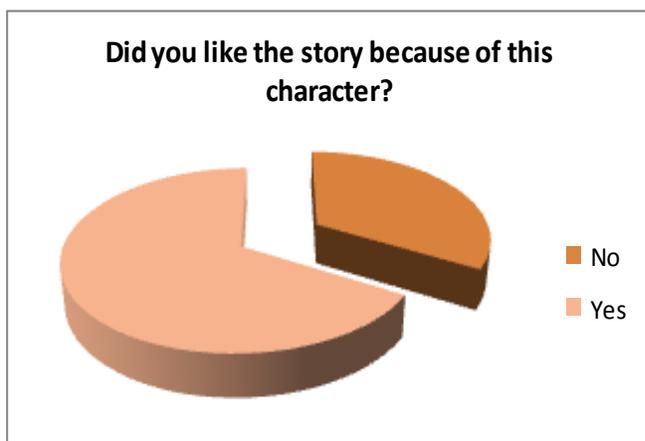
With the help of the submitted examples, the paper aims to understand the impact that a mentally ill character, in a work of fiction, has on the story, and how, in turn, the character affects the readers.

3. RESULTS

A universe of 50 people was interviewed regarding the topic. On evaluation of the responses, the following results emerged:



1. 48.8% of the people interviewed were familiar with Gollum, from Lord Of The Rings
2. 75.6% of the people interviewed were familiar with The Mad Hatter, from Alice In Wonderland and
3. 48.8% of the people interviewed were familiar with Bertha Mason, from Jane Eyre



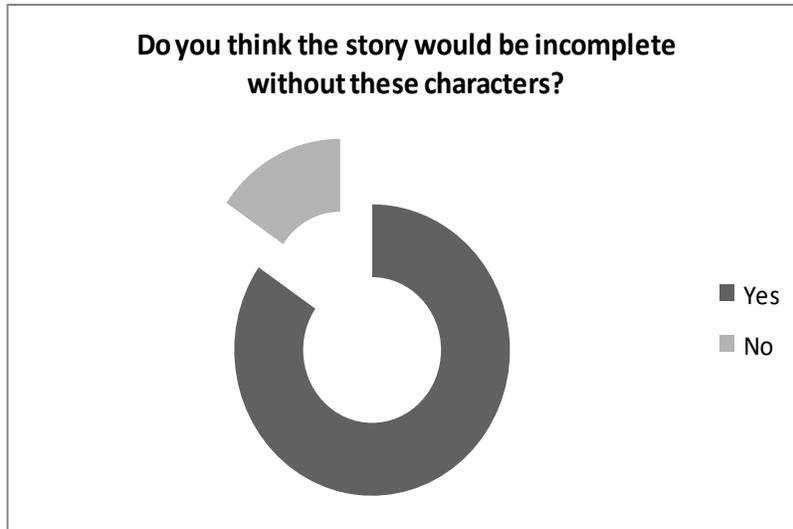
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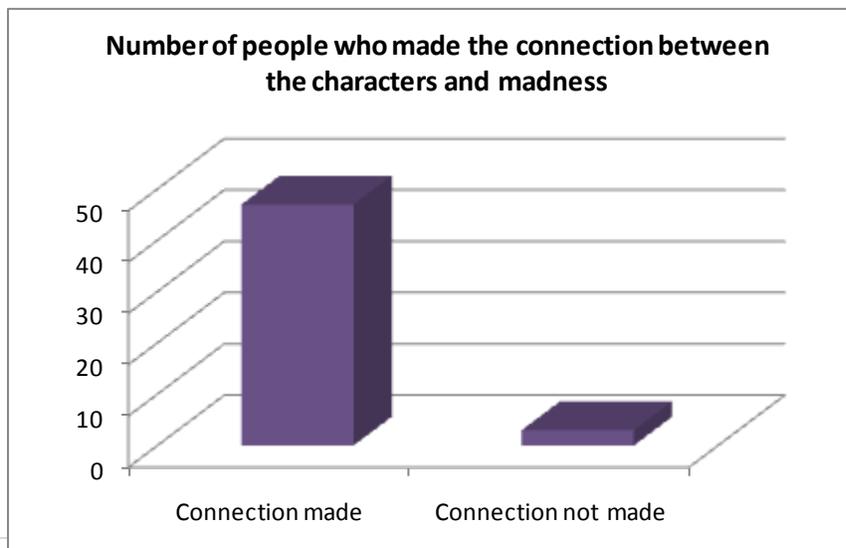
1. 66.6% of the people interviewed liked the story because of the character



2. 33.4% of the people interviewed did not like the story because of the character

1. 85.6% of the people interviewed think that the story would be incomplete without these characters.

2. 15.4% of the people interviewed do not think that the story would be incomplete without these characters



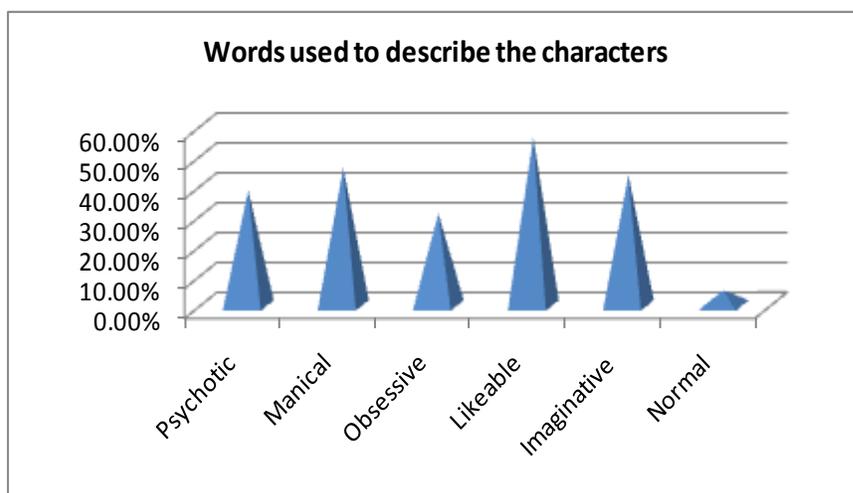
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1. 47 people made the connection between the characters given and madness
2. 3 people did not make the connection between the characters given and madness.



1. 38.5% of the people used the word 'Psychotic'
2. 46.2% of the people used the word 'Manical'
3. 30.8% of the people used the word 'Obsessive'
4. 56.4% of the people used the word 'Likeable'
5. 43.6% of the people used the word 'Imaginative'
6. 5.1% of the people used the word 'Normal'.

4. INFERENCES

1. A majority of the people interviewed were familiar with The Mad Hatter, with equal minorities familiar with Bertha Mason and Gollum.
2. A majority of the people liked the story only because of the mad character.
3. Only a minority of the people interviewed think that the story would be complete without the characters.
4. Most of the people interviewed made the connection between the 'mad' characters.

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5. Almost half of the people interviewed thought that these characters were likeable.

5. CONCLUSION

A novel's main purpose is to entertain the readers (or so our ancestors thought), and one can safely say that that is the purpose for which the 'mad' characters were created.

Thus, with the results of the survey analyzed and interpreted, the author has gained valuable insight into the minds of the readers.

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