

Character evaluation



The Five Factor Model in contemporary psychology is a paradigm which can be used to describe different film characters. Personality psychologists have narrowed down personality traits into five clusters which include Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. This paper describes the character of Sara Crewe in the film "A Little Princess" (Cuaron, 1005) using the Five Factor Model. It is argued that Sara despite her open, conscientious, agreeable, and extraverted nature possessed neurotic characteristics in some parts of the film. It is concluded that Sara as a film character is well-developed and not one-dimensional like other film heroes and villains are.

The main theme of the film, faith, is embodied by the character of Sara Crewe. Growing up to a rich family in India, Sara believes that all girls are princesses. As a young girl, she was encouraged by her father to believe in such things as magic. As a result, Sara became more in touch with the fantasy world than in the banal realities of life. She enjoys reliving and retelling the story of Ramayana, takes pleasure in reading books and playing with expensive dolls, and most importantly, appreciates a world of make-believe that is driven by fantasy. Her being open to the arts, emotions, unconventional ideas, and adventure is what brings life to the movie.

Saras open nature has influenced the way she was perceived and treated by the schools headmistress, Miss Minchin, the students, and the servant girl, Becky. During her first week at school, Sara became an instant favorite among the students because of her ability to tell the story of Ramayana in such a creative and engaging manner. By imagining that she could talk to her dead mother in heaven, Sara was able to remove the tantrums of Lottie

who also lost her mother as a young child. In one of the most memorable scenes in the film, a flower vendor offers Sara a bright yellow flower and utters the phrase "For the princess." Sara received the flower with a smile and then, like a princess, took a bow. A turning point in the film, this scene established that all girls are, indeed, princesses regardless of their social and economic status. Sara's being open led her to acknowledge and believe what her father has been telling her all along, and which was re-affirmed by the flower vendor.

Sara also acted with a sense of duty, self-discipline, and achievement. Because Sara knew the French language by heart, she felt it was her duty to teach the other students on her free time. This proposal somewhat irritated Miss Minchin because she couldn't accept that Sara, young as she were, would be able to handle teaching French to other students. Sara, nevertheless, taught Ermengarde some French lessons once in a while. Sara also displayed self-discipline at various points in the film. She promised to wear her jewelries only in the bedroom which she fulfilled. After being reduced to a servant, she followed strictly Miss Minchin's rule of not initiating any form of communication with other students. Being endowed with intelligence, meanwhile, it was natural for Sara to aim for achievement in school.

The extraverted traits of seeking the company of others, possessing positive emotions, and the agreeable traits of compassion and cooperation were also displayed by Sara. Every night, Sara would invite other students to her bedroom and enjoy storytelling with them. She was loved by other students because she exudes happiness and cheerfulness all the time. Although extraverts establish superficial and shallow relationships, Sara, on the

contrary, values deep and meaningful friendships. Her agreeable nature led her to show compassion to the Becky, the servant girl, and develop a sister-like relationship with her. Sara was able to see beyond race, class, and economic status. Her sincere compassion for other people was one of her most admirable traits.

Sara, meanwhile, also displayed some neurotic characteristics in some points of the film. When her father died, she began to doubt the existence of magic and came to realize that she was no longer a princess. She cried during the night and seemed to have lost concentration during the day. These neurotic episodes, however, were brief and quite understandable for a young girl who has experienced major life changes. In addition, Sara's disappointments were translated into mischievous acts against Miss Minchin and Lavinia. Candidly, Sara casted a spell on Lavinia which was supposed to lead to hairfall. In one scene with Becky, Sara threw a bucket of ash into Miss Minchin's chimney. These neurotic characteristics show Sara's darker side.

The Five Factor Model analysis of Sara reveals a well-rounded and well-developed character. Like most human beings, Sara possessed desirable characteristics as well as the undesirable ones. If Sara's characteristics are put in a hierarchy, openness and conscientiousness would be on top, followed by extraversion and agreeableness. Unlike other film characters who are neatly separated by their heroic and villainous roles, Sara occupied the boundary that separated these two roles. She was likeable and lovable but she also had imperfections. What makes Sara a remarkable character is her ability to overcome and survive the struggles of her life.

References

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Cuaron, A. (Director). (1995). *A little princess* [Film]. Chicago: Warner Bros. Pictures.