

# Manipulation and appreciation in coraline



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* introduces the story's antagonist far before that very antagonist's evil intentions are revealed. In the novel, a young girl Coraline has just moved into an old home. She feels ignored by her parents who are too busy working to pay attention to her. When she stumbles upon the door that leads to her other Mother, who has excessive amounts of time to spend with Coraline, it appears to Coraline that her wishes had been answered. The other Mother uses manipulation in order to ease Coraline's worries regarding the usual situation she finds herself in. Though Coraline is quick to feel unsafe within her other Mother's household, she is forced to return in order to save her parents. While the other Mother has violent intentions, she primarily relies on manipulation and exploiting negative feelings children feel towards their parents in order to achieve her goals. Though the other Mother plays the role of villain, it is from her that Coraline learns to appreciate her own family more.

When attempting to persuade Coraline to join the other family, her other Mother focuses on two main issues Coraline has with her parents. The first is the amount of time they spend with her. Though not specifically stated in the book, it is clear the Coraline is frustrated with her parents for not having time to play with her. During her first rainy day, Coraline quickly runs out of things to do and tells both her parents she is bored. Rather than engaging with her, as Coraline would like, both parents dismiss her with suggestions like reading a book, or counting all the doors in the house. Neither of these activates hold Coraline's attention long. She finds both her parents and the house dull. When venturing into the other Mother's house, however, things are different. Coraline finds the home itself an "awful lot more interesting"

(Gaiman 19) and finds more engaging activities within it, such as the rats her other Mother suggests she plays with. Coraline finds the other house a much more engaging and entertaining place to be, assisting in the other Mother's attempt to keep Coraline there.

Coraline also finds issue with the food her family makes for her. She dislikes the recipes her father makes, insisting her should just make normal food. At the beginning of the novel, her father has made a leek and potato stew that Coraline refuses to eat. It is clear from her remarks about her father's cooking that she dislikes the elaborate dishes he tries to create. When she visits the other house, her other Father has cooked a meal for lunch that is much simpler. The other family's lunch was tasty chicken with no "weird things" (19) done to it. This is the family meal Coraline has envisioned her family partaking in. The other Mother has had a meal created to suit the desires of Coraline, showcasing the benefits of staying with the other mother rather than returning to her real family. By exploiting Coraline's complaints about her home life, the other Mother attempts to persuade Coraline into remaining with her.

After Coraline successfully defeats the other Mother and returns home with her real parents, it is clear there is a change in her personality, specifically regarding her interactions with her parents. Additionally, her parents appear to interact with her differently. When greeting her father for the first time since her adventure, Coraline notes that her father picks her up something he had "not done for such a long time" (75) suggesting a change in the dynamic of their relationship. While at the beginning of the novel Coraline feels ignored by her parents, she now is experiencing attention she has not

had in a while. For dinner, her father has once again made a recipe. Unlike her refusal to try her father's soup, she devours an entire slice of the homemade pizza (sans the pineapple). This shows a new appreciation for her parents. She is no longer complaining about aspects of their relationships but engaging heavily in them.

The other Mother's manipulation of Coraline changes her perspective of her relationship with her family: the aspects of this familial relationship that Coraline disliked are the very aspects that the other Mother attempted to use against her. Rather than having Coraline chose to live with her because of the changes, Coraline instead associates the other Mother's manipulation with her previous desires. She no longer wishes for her parents to stray heavily from their work, or to cook simpler dishes, she is happy to have the family she has.