

From *Boy* by Roald Dahl

Her name was Mrs. Pratchett. She was a small skinny old hag with a moustache on her upper lip and a mouth as sour as a **green** gooseberry. She never smiled. She never welcomed us when we went in. By far the most loathsome thing about Mrs. Pratchett was the filth that clung about her. Her apron was **grey** and greasy. Her blouse had bits of breakfast all over it, toast-crumbs and tea stains and splotches of dried egg yolk. It was her hands, however, that disturbed us most. They were disgusting. They were **black** with dirt and grime. They looked as though they had been putting lumps of coal on the fire all day long. The mere sight of her grimy right hand with its **black** fingernails digging an ounce of Chocolate Fudge out of the jar would have caused a starving tramp to go running from the shop.

Extract from *Boy* © Roald Dahl

1. As a reader, what is your initial reaction to Mrs Pratchett?
2. In your own words, make a list of Mrs Pratchett's negative features.
3. What can you say about the order these features are in?
4. Copy down two phrases that make her seem especially disgusting.
5. Explain why these phrases are particularly powerful.
6. Comment on the use of colour in the passage.
7. Roald Dahl intended Mrs Pratchett to be a revolting character, is he successful?
8. Write a paragraph explaining how Roald Dahl has created the character of Mrs Pratchett; use the ideas from your answers to the above questions.

Extension activity:

Create your own character using the same techniques as Dahl. Firstly decide what sort of person you are going to describe and the features you are going to focus on. You might decide to write a really negative description like Dahl or alternatively you might decide to be extremely positive in your description.