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"PIGGY BANK WITH LOVE" BY MARIA PETROVSKA OR LEARNING HOW LOVE IS MULTIPLICATED

Jovanka Denkova

Faculty of Philology, Goce Delcev University, Stip,
R. N. Macedonia,
jovanka.denkova@ugd.edu.mk

Abstract. The novel for young people "Piggy bank with love" by the young author Marija Petrovska deals with the problem of insufficient closeness in everyday life. Through the character of the young girl Iskra, the author talks about the need for greater mutual tolerance, paying attention to the people with whom our lives come into direct contact in all its segments, at work, at home, in school, in social activities etc.

Key words: adolescents, young adult literature, Marija Petrovska.

Introduction

Iskra is a girl who (probably) attends the upper grades of primary school. Her vocabulary implies this only in certain moments of the book, which may also indicate some small inconsistencies in the conceptualization of the work, due to the inexperience of the author. The most obvious in that context is the episode when Iskra goes to the dentist at her friend's mother. The entire dialogue between the dentist and Iskra can be attributed to a younger girl, which in turn, does not correspond to all other situations in the book in which we see Iskra as a girl who is in the so-called middle adolescence, or at least on the threshold between early and middle adolescence. Here we would like to recall some characteristics of adolescence. Adolescence is the phase of the transition from child to adult, which roughly takes the period between 11 and 19 years. Adolescents experience not only physical growth and changes, but also emotional, psychological, social and mental changes and growth. Adolescence can be broadly categorized into three stages – early adolescence (approximately age 11 to 13 years), middle adolescence (approximately age 14 to 17 years) and late adolescence (approximately age 17 to 19 years). In addition, a phase of adulthood from 18 to 25 years was introduced, which is still a controversial and conditional phase (Salmela-Aro, 2011: 360-368).

Learning about love

The novel begins with a tense atmosphere, which is an everyday situation among students. In such conditions, the students tease each other, but also use harsh words and insults: "Screams echoed from the classroom". There were undisguised anger and insulting words in the verbal confrontations....- "You fool! I'm going to rip you off now! - Igor blushed and turned to Iskra" (Petrovska, 2022, p.9). The polarization in the relations between boys and girls in the class is obvious, which leads to frequent conflicts. Conflict is a natural aspect of most ongoing close relationships, possibly because of the high value placed on individualism. Conflict occurs between people in all types of human relationships and in all social settings. Because every aspect of living or working together contains the seeds of situational conflict, relationship conflicts can arise between family members, friends, and employees of the

organization. Conflict inherently involves some kind of struggle, incompatibility, or perceived differences in values, goals, or desires; characteristics, beliefs and lifestyle; and power of influence and action between two or more parties in a relationship, combined with attempts to control each other and antagonistic feelings toward each other (Amponsaa Opoku-Asare, Takyi, Owusu-Mensah, 2015).

Conflict in the school environment can have negative effects on the academic environment, including affecting teacher morale, the pace at which they work and increasing absenteeism (Jennings, Wattam, 2004). Good interpersonal relationships in the school setting are recommended, which include how well teachers treat students, how teachers are with each other, how the school relates to students' parents or guardians, and the community as a whole (Kyriacou, 1999).

In such conditions, the reaction of the teacher is of crucial importance. He should find the truly adequate solution that will calm the students' anxiety and aggressive emotions. Social-emotional changes are part of a child's journey to adulthood. Adolescents are very emotional and receptive to emotions and show emotions intensely. They are equipped with a greater understanding of emotions, their expression and regulation with growing maturity. Emotions become the key to establishing social relationships, navigating these relationships, and functioning effectively in the world and recognizing the purpose of life (Kapur, 2015, pp. 233 -250). In the novel "Piggy bank with love" as a mediator, but also a pacifier between the quarrelling groups in the class, you will find the class teacher Betty, who with a rebuke, but also with mild blackmail, will point out to the students that there is a way to show themselves and prove that they can behave differently: "Amazing! I leave you for ten minutes, and you will have a general fight! So who are you just insulting and beating? Don't you see that these are your friends with whom you share many experiences for years, learn together, laugh, play. So you have to defend each other! I've heard some wonderful compliments about your friends. I'm so sorry, kids, but if you keep going like this, the field trip to the candy factory will be cancelled. I can't have students who treat each other like blood" (Petrovska, 2022, p.9). And what is more attractive for children/students than a trip (excursion) to a chocolate factory? And it is here that the teacher finds the way to approach the students, to teach them how to overcome hate speech and to teach them about positive interpersonal relationships. Her challenge with the five languages of love is just a way that will practically motivate students to behave carefully at school, at home, and towards themselves. Through the piggy banks, in which instead of money they will be placed with messages with positive feelings, the teacher will motivate the students to improve relations even among those students between whom there used to be conflicts. The random choice, or the lottery organized by the teacher, determines the communication between the students, which should develop friendship between them: "I will have you draw numbers according to the number of students. You all know which number in turn you are in the log, so when you draw your buddy's number, that buddy will need to pay attention. I will guide you and direct you how" (Petrovska, 2022, p.12). But what does the term "friendship" mean? Amy Shuffelton explains that, because friendship is a deeply social concept, it cannot be explained by a precise definition. So, here we find Aristotle's understanding of friendship as reciprocal and mutually recognized by which one wishes good for the other. However, the basic qualities of friendship seem to be expressed here, and yet much is left to the influence of culture. Aristotle mainly distinguishes three types of friendship: friendship of utility, pleasure and virtue (Shuffelton, 2011, pp. 81-89). If we go into the idea of the teacher Elizabeth, we will see that her intention to develop friendship between classmates/children is based on this triad of Aristotle: it is based on "serving", that is, the teacher teaches the students to "serve" each other, which will cause satisfaction in themselves and in the other person, and thus they will develop only positive virtues: write a nice message for their friend, give them a small gift or do something for them. Going through all those challenges, the atmosphere in the classroom begins to change: "Iskra noticed that real joy and unusual togetherness began to reign in the classroom. This class seemed to be light years away from that group of classmates who were ready to jump on each other" (Petrovska, 2022, p.18). Specifically, in the foreground of the novel is Iskra, a girl who has

parents and an older brother - an adolescent, who studies in the same school. Her mission of teaching the five languages of love begins at school, getting closer to her classmate Marta with whom she shares her love for kittens, and Marta (whose mother is a dentist) will help Iskra overcome her fear of the dentist and fix her the tooth. Together, they will organize with all the classmates to buy him the desired sneakers: "She knew that his parents were in a difficult financial situation because his mother had recently lost her job and could not immediately find another one. She knew that Nikola was in desperate need of sneakers for his favourite sport - basketball..." (Petrovska, 2022, p.20).

And while at school, student relationships experience a revival: "The whole gift exchange was so emotional and wonderful that teacher Betty's eyes watered at times. How extraordinary and lavish with feelings and a bright mood reigned in the classroom. The children were reminded how happy they are when they make someone else happy" (Petrovska, 2022, p. 22); in Iskra's family, things are not so simple. Iskra knows her parents well and it won't be difficult for her to show them her love through things she knows they love: "I realized that your love language is physical touch and that's why I want to use it more often with you. I realized that dad's language of love is acts of service, so I want to serve him by cleaning the basement. I will also water his garden so he can rest after work is done. I noticed that Sime's love language is quality time spent, in conversations and activities and being truly present for friends" (Petrovska, 2022, p. 55). Her careful and responsible behaviour will not go unnoticed by her parents: "I was pleasantly surprised, Iskrička. You have changed lately. You do my hair, you massage me, you give me hugs, now you're cleaning the basement, do the toothpick. Are you in love?" (p. 55). The only difficulty for Iskra is to find a way to approach her brother and show him her love: "It's harder for me with him, because he often annoys me, so it's hard for me to find a desire and a way to fill his piggy bank" (Petrovska, 2022, p. 55).

Siblings are a significant source of conflict for most children and adolescents. Like friends, siblings provide companionship. However, unlike friends, siblings are usually different in age, bound by involuntary bonds, and may or may not like each other as individuals. Sibling interactions are hypothesized to have a different function in adolescent development. But the possible role of sibling conflict in adolescent development has been largely ignored. In contrast to the developmental focus of peer and friend conflict research, sibling conflict is typically discussed as an external manifestation of unconscious rivalry processes (Raffaelli, 1997, pp. 539-558).

Communication between Iskra and Sime is difficult for several reasons. First, it is evident from the novel that Sime is older than Iskra, that he is probably already deep into adolescence and that he has a girlfriend - Nina, with whom he sometimes has love problems. Hence, emotional changes are often noticed in him, as well as changes in behaviour towards Iskra: "Iskra could not believe what she was hearing. "I'll give them back" and "please" were not part of Sime's vocabulary towards her... There must be something seriously wrong with my brother. Didn't someone disguise himself as my brother? No, no, no. No way" (Petrovska, 2022, p.19). A study by Oliva and Arantz investigated the relationship between siblings in adolescence and found that sibling interactions were related to adolescents' interactions with their peers. They also highlight the influence of sibling interactions on various psychological variables, such as personal adjustment, self-esteem, antisocial behaviour, problems related to depression, and other behavioural problems. Research has shown that girls/sisters are likely to have a higher level of interpersonal sensitivity and are able to offer more support to their brothers, thus somehow compensating for the gender difference. These findings can be interpreted in accordance with the hypothesis that women tend to make a greater emotional investment in family relationships and therefore build an identity that is more dependent on the quality of those relationships (Oliva, Arranz, 2005, pp. 253-270).

Another moment that makes it difficult for Iskra to communicate with her brother Sime is the fact that Iskra is overweight, because of which Sime often mocks her and insults her: "Where are you, a wine barrel?" - he said to her, enjoying the words he deliberately chose to hurt her because, to tell the truth, Iskra had some extra pounds that she couldn't lose, and her brother, who shamelessly ate whatever he wanted and didn't pay attention to his diet at all ,

was as weak as a tomato stake" (Petrovska, 2022, p. 23); "Iskra was given the epithet 'barrel' by her brother, which in truth, was not the only word he used to honour her, wanting to encourage the angry reaction and the angry glint in Iskra's emerald eyes. Nothing in the world made him laugh more than when Iskra was angry. She was also called 'sumo', short for sumo wrestler, 'michelle' because her thigh and waist enhancements reminded him of 'michelle' tires and 'rock man'" (Petrovska, 2022, p. 60).

A study by Patricia East found that the role structure of siblings also changes during adolescence, as the power differential between older and younger siblings narrows. During early and middle childhood, the older sibling is more dominant in the relationship, feeling that they have more power and status. But starting around age 11 or 12, older and younger siblings begin to establish a balance of power, with both older and younger siblings able to assume an authoritative role in the relationship (East, 2009, pp. 43-73). It is evident in this novel, at the moment when Iskra, who herself is gaining more and more awareness of herself and the environment, as a result of maturity and maturation. It makes Iskra very realistic about herself. Like any teenage girl, her physical appearance means a lot to her, so she longs for a good look like a movie star: "Sometimes, in her daydreaming games, she would just stand with her face in front of the mirror and fix her hair, imagining that she was famous and a beautiful Hollywood star... The mirror in the bathroom didn't reveal the rest of her figure, which Iskra didn't like because of the fat pads on her hips and stomach" (p. 60). Media images have a potentially indirect effect by forming an unrealistic thin image of the human figure, as well as a potentially direct effect on body image distortion. Some researchers argue that the sociocultural pressure to be thin is the strongest influence on body image. Adolescents are believed to be particularly vulnerable to weak promotional messages of weak ideals because they are at a time in their lives when they look to external information to form their own identity. As such, many researchers argue that mass media has a direct influence on adolescents' concept of the ideal body and their body image (Botta, 1999, pp. 22-41).

From this, she has a desire to work on herself and her own development: "She decided that enough is enough. That she no longer wants to be a toy in her brother's hands. She wanted to breathe free. Her brother was right. She has relaxed a lot in terms of weight. She remembered how when she got particularly upset with her brother, she would raid the refrigerator and eat quickly and mechanically without thinking or even enjoying it. She attacked the food when her brother could no longer" (Petrovska, 2022, p. 25). Research shows that for adolescent girls, their body image is very important to them and affects their self-esteem, much more so than adolescent boys. Body image is central to girls' self-definition, as they are socialized to believe that appearance is an important basis for self-evaluation and evaluation by others (Clay, Vignoles, Dittmar, 2005, pp. 451-477).

Thus, apart from the love for classmates, friends, friends, parents and brother, Iskra will learn that perhaps the most important thing is self-love, and the knowledge that we should love ourselves, first of all, so that we can love others. In that direction, Iskra, who until then was shy, withdrawn and with a deep fear of a new environment, realizes that the change has already begun to take place in her: "In its own miraculous way, the challenges of teacher Betty, filling her piggy bank with love and growing closer to Martha encouraged her to come out of her cocoon and follow her dream" (Petrovska, 2022, p. 62), so she decides to make changes in her physical appearance (together with Marta they practice aerobics), but also in the spiritual sphere, i.e. to dedicate herself to her great love - painting in the art studio 'Artista': "She wanted to engrave in his memory this place which she firmly decided to visit it and develop hers artistic inclinations" (Petrovska, 2022, p. 61).

When she realizes this, she begins to approach and agree with her brother, whom she tries to help with his love problems with his girlfriend, after which they begin to spend more quality time together: "Tears rolled down her cheeks. She couldn't believe it. Her mother always told her that things work out, that you have to believe that everything will fall into place. Everything falls into place when our love piggy bank is full. Love fills all the gaps, forgives mistakes and insults, brings sparkle in the eyes and flight in the heart" (Petrovska, 2022, p. 71).

Finally, we refer to teacher Betty's quote to the students: "Now I want you to take your piggy banks and every time you feel your piggy banks empty, do something for yourself to fill them up. And then, after you've taken care of yourself, do your best to fill someone else's piggy bank. Chances are high that the 'coin' of love will be reciprocated. After all, it is love that makes life full of meaning, excitement and worth living" (Petrovska, 2022, p. 83), as a kind of 'instruction' for a productive life, filled with good deeds, mutual tolerance and charity, as the only principle of universal love.

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