

Hundred Dresses –Part I,II

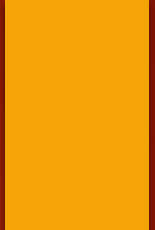
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Hundred Dresses was written in 1944 by Eleanor Estes but is still as popular today as it was when it was published. The story is based on Estes' own experiences; whilst in elementary school she had a classmate who was teased because she wore the same dress to school every day, and because she, like the character Wanda in the novel, had a Polish last name that was almost unpronounceable. Estes never forgot the little girl and felt guilty for teasing her. She knew what it felt like to be poor, to wear hand me downs and to have clothing too thin for the cold weather. This was not a good reason to be teased. Looking for a way to right this wrong, Estes decided to write the little girl's story, which is how *A Hundred Dresses* evolved.

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- ▶ The Hundred Dresses is a story based on the true experiences of the author about a girl who is teased by her classmates because she is different. Wanda Petronski, a girl who comes from the poor part of town, is the only student in her class with a 'funny' Polish name. She is always quiet and she always wears the same faded blue dress to school everyday, although she claims she has a hundred dresses at home "all lined up in her closet."

- ▶ The story is told from the perspective of one of Wanda's classmates, Maddie, who is the best friend of Peggy and they both taunt and tease Wanda. Wanda gets absent for a few days and no one notices her absence. Maddie begins to wonder about the girl she and her friends used to constantly tease, and realizes that she knows very little about her. She begins to wonder why they started teasing her in the first place and is overcome with guilt for making fun of her simply because she is poor and has a funny name and is different from them. Maddie knows that she should have stood up to her friends and defended Wanda. She feels guilty for not speaking up, for standing by and allowing her friends to tease Wanda.

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- ▶ Maddie and her friends later discover that Wanda is a very talented artist, and that her drawing of one hundred beautiful dresses has won the School's Art Contest. The girls realize that they misjudged Wanda, and feel incredibly guilty for never believing her stories of her 'one hundred dresses.'

Wanda Petronski

- ▶ Wanda is the owner of the hundred dresses in the book's title. She is of Polish heritage and has a name most people struggle to pronounce. She is from a poor family and lives in the poor area of town with her brother and father. She is a quiet child who rarely says anything and never laughs. Wanda is teased, not because she wears the same dress to school every day, but because she claims to have one hundred dresses at home. She never speaks up against the girls teasing her, but says nothing whilst they do so. Wanda has a tremendous capacity for forgiveness, extending friendship to Peggy and Maddie after she has moved away. Wanda is an incredibly talented artist and designer, the hundred dresses being stylish and eye-catching designs on paper, for which she wins the drawing and color contest at school and which shows her in a very different light among her peers.

Peggy

- ▶ Peggy is the most popular girl in school and is confident and talented. Although she is the instigator of the teasing she is not really a mean girl, as she does not see the teasing as picking on Wanda; from Peggy's perspective she is just calling Wanda out for her obviously silly fib about having one hundred dresses at home. After they see Wanda's drawings she is self-effacing enough to concede that although she is good at drawing Wanda is far more talented. Peggy feels rather guilty about Wanda leaving and is worried that her teasing has driven Wanda away. Peggy does learn an important lesson about not teasing people and is otherwise a nice child who would not consider herself, nor be considered by other, to be a bully.

Maddie

- ▶ Maddie is Peggy's best friend and also teases Wanda but knows in her heart this is wrong. Unfortunately because she is not quite as popular as Wanda she is reluctant to speak up and say that the teasing is unkind. Maddie is also quite poor and wears hand-me-downs, many from Peggy, which her mother alters or embellishes with braid and ribbons to make sure nobody at school remembers seeing them before. It is this fact that makes her reluctant to stick up for Wanda as she is concerned that if the class then realizes she is also poor they will start teasing her instead. Maddie becomes a stronger person by the end of the book and decides that in the future she will be the champion of anyone who is teased and not be one of the children teasing them.



The second part begins with a letter received from Wanda's father informing the school about their moving to a big city where nobody would tease Wanda for her funny name as well her appearance. After getting familiar with the content of the letter through the teacher the whole class gets stunned and realized their derogatory remarks and attitude towards Wanda.

Maddie felt so bad that she couldn't concentrate on her studies after knowing the facts. She wanted to meet Wanda in person to clarify her stand that she never meant to hurt her feelings.

When the school was over Maddie and Peggy both went to the residence of Wanda at Boggins Height to meet her but by that time they had already left so their visit was fruitless.

Then they wrote a friendly letter to Wanda telling her she had won the contest but the letter was not responded by Wanda. On Christmas Miss Mason their teacher received a letter from Wanda informing that she was no more in need of those hundred dresses as she had new hundred dresses in her new house hence those should be gifted to the girls especially blue one to Maddie and green one to Peggy.



They accepted and pinned them in their bedrooms .There Maddie gazed for a long time at the picture and found that the face in the drawing was resembling to her own. Then she ran to Peggy's house to see her drawing also. Peggy was also happy to find same in the drawing. Peggy consoled herself saying that Wanda really liked them. Maddie agreed and blinked away the tears which came every time she thought of Wanda Petronski.



Although they have teased her every single day, Wanda forgives Maddie and Peggy and demonstrates this by giving them each one of the beautiful dresses she has painted. This also shows Wanda to be the bigger person given that her school experience has not been fun because of them. She shows that by forgiving and reaching out unlikely friendships can be forged, but she also creates change in the way that Peggy and Maddie behave as they feel guilty for bullying her and her forgiveness makes them determined to be much nicer and not to tease in the future.