

Birth Order Characteristics of the Penderwick Sisters in Jeanne Birdsall's *The Penderwicks Series*

Sarah Nurul Anggreni, Rahmawan Jatmiko*
English Department, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: rahmawan.jatmiko@ugm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study examines the middle-grade series, *The Penderwicks*, written by Jeanne Birdsall. The object of analysis of this research is the main characters of the series, the Penderwick sisters. The objective of this research is to analyze whether or not the characteristic that the Penderwick sisters possess fit into their designated birth order characteristics proposed by Adler (1929). This research also adopted Murphy's (1972) theory of characterization because this theory meets the requirement to analyze works using a close reading method. The results show that each Penderwick sister has very distinct characteristics. However, only some of the characteristics that the Penderwick sisters possess fit into Adler's birth order characteristics.

Keywords: *Alfred Adler, birth order theory, characterisation, Penderwick sisters, the Penderwicks.*

INTRODUCTION

Compared to other branches of literature, children's literature is still considered new. Children's literature developed as a differential and independent form of literature within the second half of the 18th century (Fadiman, 2017). Children's literature is slowly flourishing. This could be seen from the analysis data conducted by IBISWorld (2020). According to the report, the revenue of the children's book publishing industry was \$2.0 billion in 2021, with an expected increase of 2.6% in 2021 from the previous year (IBISWorld, 2020). We believe that introducing books at an early age is beneficial for children's development. A study stated that reading since early childhood is actually beneficial for children's language and literary skills development (Dexter & Stacks, 2014). Another study

also finds that reading also helps children to perform better in school (Huebner & Payne, 2010). But despite all the benefits of reading stated above, we still need to work hard to promote the culture of introducing books from a young age. A research study commissioned by Alton Towers Resort finds that out of 3,000 parents in the United Kingdom, only one in five tells bedtime stories to their children every night (Kendrick, 2015). With the information above, we want to advocate the importance of reading for children's development.

As reading is already well-established as an important activity for children's development, hence we attempt to explore middle-grade books as the main subject of this research. A middle-grade book itself is a book that is intended for readers from the group age of eight to twelve years old and has a variety of genres (Maughan, 2018). One example of a

middle-grade book is *The Penderwicks series* written by Jeanne Birdsall. *The Penderwicks series* is a series that features five main heroines as the protagonists of the series. These heroines are the daughters of the Penderwick family. The eldest is Rosalind Penderwick, the second child Skye Penderwick, the third child Jane Penderwick, the fourth child Elizabeth “Batty” Penderwick, and the youngest Lydia Penderwick. There are a total of five books in the series: *The Penderwicks: A Summer Tale of Four Sisters, Two Rabbits and a Very Interesting Boy* (2005), *The Penderwicks on Gardam Street* (2008), *The Penderwicks at Point Mouette* (2011), *The Penderwicks in Spring* (2015), *The Penderwicks at Last* (2018). The first book won the annual U.S. National Book Award for Young People’s Literature in 2005.

The first three books of the series centered around Rosalind, Skye, Jane and Batty Penderwick’s adventures in different times and places for each book. The fourth child, Batty Penderwick, was the original youngest Penderwick sister before Lydia was born. Lydia Penderwick was first introduced in the fourth book of the series, *The Penderwicks in Spring*. The sisters’ father, Martin Penderwick, remarries in the second book with a next-door neighbour, Iantha Aaronson. Iantha has a toddler son named Ben Aaronson from her previous marriage. It makes Ben Aaronson Penderwick the fifth and the only male sibling in the family. Years later, the youngest female sibling, Lydia Penderwick, was born. Out of the six siblings, Jeanne Birdsall only featured the five female siblings as the main heroines of the series.

The Penderwicks series by Jeanne Birdsall is one of the critically acclaimed middle-grade series. The judges for U.S. National Book Award stated that “[...] This enormously heart-warming and satisfying novel honours and enriches the beloved tradition of the classic children’s family story. The Penderwicks are worthy companions to Alcott’s March sisters or Nesbit’s Bastables—endearing and enduring characters whose company we can cherish” (National Book Foundation, n.d.). We shared the same sentiment as the judges’ statement above. The series is easy to follow, with well-written characters and characters’ backgrounds. The Penderwicks series feel right to be selected as the object of the research paper. Due to the way the author narrates each character, we find that each Penderwick sister fits

with their designated birth order characteristic proposed by Alfred Adler.

This study addresses the question of whether or not the characteristics that the Penderwick sisters possess fit into their designated birth order characteristics proposed by Alfred Adler. Therefore it also examines the workability of Adler’s theory in relation to birth order.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is hard to find previous studies on children’s literature. Studies focusing on birth order characteristics or using *the Penderwicks series* as the object of the research are almost impossible to find. One study by Saputri (2015) focuses on the characteristics of children’s literature in Diterlizzi’s (2008) *Kenny and the Dragon*. It examines whether or not DiTerlizzi’s novel entitled *Kenny and the Dragon* can be categorized as children’s literature. The results of the analysis show that the novel meets the requirements for children’s literature since it exhibits the characteristics of children’s literature suggested by Nodelman (2008).

Another study conducted by Prajaningtyas and Adi (2020) examines whether or not John Boyne’s novel entitled *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* should be categorized as children’s literature. The results of the analysis suggest that John Boyne’s *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* cannot be categorized as children’s literature primarily because the novel does not indicate the characteristics of children’s literature as proposed by Nodelman (2008).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In line with the objective of the study, we applied a psychological approach to analyze the chosen literary works. The psychological approach was chosen as the approach of study because this research paper attempts to discover whether or not the way of main characters’ portrayal in *The Penderwicks series* match with their designated birth order characteristics using Adler’s (1929) theory of birth order. The psychological approach adopted here is proposed by Wellek and Warren (1942).

By 'psychology of literature,' we may mean the psychological study of the writer, as type and as individual, or the study of the creative process, or the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature, or, finally the effects of literature upon its reader (audience psychology) (p. 75).

Wellek and Warren further explained that out of the four kinds of 'psychological approaches,' only the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature "belongs, in the strictest sense, to literary study." In this research, we also examined the psychological types and laws present within the works of literature due to their focus as an approach to studying and examining the main characters' psychological aspects. This approach is helpful in understanding the way of portrayal of the main characters and the relationship between their characterization the Adler's birth order characteristics. Further theories related to character, characterization, and birth order characteristics are adopted as those theories that are mentioned are necessary to the analysis of this research paper. The theory of character and characterization is used to analyze the Penderwick sisters' characters, and the theory of birth order is also used to figure out whether or not the characterization of each Penderwick sister possess is based on their designated characteristic according to the position of the Penderwick sisters in the family.

Murphy (1972) proposes a theory of characterization. Murphy stated that there are nine ways of characterization to understand characters in literary works: personal description of the character, character as seen by others, speech, past life, conversation with others, reactions, direct comments, thoughts, and mannerisms (Murphy, 1972, pp. 161-173). We adopted Murphy's theory of characterization. The purpose of using Murphy's theory of characterization is to be able to explore and analyze the Penderwick sisters' characterization on a deeper level in order to understand the portrayal of their characters. In addition, we adopted Adler's theory of birth order to analyze the Penderwick sisters in the series *the Penderwicks*. The purpose of using Adler's theory of birth order is to be able to analyze whether or not the Penderwick sisters' characterization meets the birth order characteristics proposed Adler (1929).

The theory of birth order proposed by Adler can be found in his 1929 book entitled *Problems of Neurosis: A Book of Case-Histories*. Alfred Adler, born on February 7, 1870, was an Austrian psychiatrist and founder of the school of individual psychology (Hoffman, 1994). He was one of the first theorists that proposed the theory of birth order on personality (Dean, 2021). Adler argues that children's characteristics are affected by the order of their birth and the number of siblings they have. In his book, Adler (1929) called upon the importance of understanding the "Family Constellation":

It is a common fallacy to imagine that children of the same family are formed in the same environment. Of course there is much which is the same for all in the same home, but the psychic situation of each child is individual and differs from that of others, because of the order of their succession (p. 96).

Adler argues that despite being raised in the same environment, each child's psychological state is individual and differs from others due to the situation each of them has to face based on the order of their succession.

There are seven child positions that Adler covered in his book: only child, first child, second child, youngest child, twins, only boy among girls, and only girl among boys. For the only child, the general situation that the child might face is that since the child's birth can be considered a miracle for the family, the parents would likely be overprotective due to the lack of experience from being parents. The parents would give all their attention to the child, and the child might face a rivalry with one of their parents. This kind of situation might result in the child's characteristics being spoiled and enjoying being the center of attention, often having difficulty sharing with others, preferring adult company, and also using adult language instead of speaking like their age (p. 111).

The second child's position is the first child. The general situation that first children might face is that since they spend some time alone without siblings, their situation is similar with only children where both of them are generally spoiled and receive the sole attention from their parents. However, once their sibling is born, the first child's status of being

an only child in the family is dethroned by the second-born child, and they will either try to steal their spotlight back or accept the situation. The bigger the age gap between the first child and second child, the more mature the first child will react toward the birth of their sibling. If dethroned very early, the eldest child's effort to steal their spotlight back is more of an instinctive character. The first child also often has to face their parents' high expectations and be given some responsibilities as the eldest in the family. This kind of situation might result in the child's characteristics being authoritarian or strict, feeling like they have more power compared to their siblings, could act as a parent toward their younger siblings, and could be helpful if encouraged (p. 96).

The third child's position is the second child. Being the second child means that they are in the middle between the eldest and youngest sibling. Adler stated that the second child's position can be applied to the other middle child's position, whether it is the third child, fourth child, and so on, as long as they stay in the middle between the eldest and youngest and also experience the similar situation (p. 106). The general situation that a second child might face is that if the second child feels inferior to the first child, the second child could act as the troublemaker (p. 100). Life is a race for them, and they could be competitive and try to surpass the first child. If the second child is sweet and well-behaved at home, they could have difficulty in life outside the home. Hence, they tend to escape to the useless side of life, for example, laziness, lying, stealing, and never finishing anything they are doing (p. 103). This kind of situation might result in the child's characteristics being troublemaker, competitive, hate being compared to their sibling, might be even-tempered, might have trouble finding a place for them in society, or becoming a fighter against injustice (p. 106).

The fourth child's position is the youngest child. The general situation that the youngest child might face is that since they never experience the "dethronement" of their position, they are most likely being spoiled. Their older siblings also often showered them with love (p. 106). The youngest

child often looks for a field of activity that is remote from the other members of the family (p. 107). This kind of situation might result in the child's characteristics being childish and spoiled, often being dependent on others, trying to be different compared to their family, might have trouble finishing their plans (p. 107).

The fifth child position is twins. The general situation that twins might face is that parents might see one of the twins as the older sibling and might have experienced a power imbalance if one of the twins is stronger or more active compared to the other twins (p. 96). This kind of situation might result in the child's characteristics being the stronger twins might become the leader out of the two and could have sibling rivalry and identity crisis (p. 96).

The sixth child position is the only boy among girls. The general situation that this child might face is that if the boy is older than all of his siblings, his situation is similar to an older brother that is close with his younger sisters. However, if the boy is the middle or youngest child in the family, he might likely develop a goal of superiority and a style of life that is directed towards the female. This situation occurs to various degrees: the boy could have a devotion to women and worship them, the boy might have imitated his female siblings' behavior, tending towards homosexuality, or in a tyrannical attitude towards women (p. 117). This kind of situation might result in the child being effeminate or might try to prove that he is the man in the family (p. 117).

The seventh child position is the only girl among boys. The general situation that this child might face is that the brothers might act as her protectors and shower her with love and affection (p. 118). This kind of situation might result in the child's characteristics being very feminine or a tomboy and trying to outdo her brothers. For the only boy and girl among their siblings' position, what happened to their characteristics largely depends on how men and women are valued in the environment and whether the child assumes to fulfill the role of a man or a woman (p. 118). By using Adler's theory of birth order, we are able to examine whether or not the Penderwicks sisters embodied specific characteristics based on their position in the family.

METHODS

The method used in the study is library research. The data were obtained from data sources in the form of written materials relevant to the study. The primary data sources were the five novels from the Penderwick series: *The Penderwicks: A Summer Tale of Four Sisters, Two Rabbits, and a Very Interesting Boy*, *The Penderwicks on Gardam Street*, *The Penderwicks at Point Mouette*, *The Penderwicks in Spring* and *The Penderwicks at Last*.

The primary data were passages from the *Penderwicks* series, which contained information about the heroines' characteristics and/or related to the characters and also stereotypes based on the order of the Penderwick sisters' birth. The data were obtained from a close reading of the novel and taking notes of the needed data from the stories. Thus, the primary data consists of narration, description, conversation, illustration, and all written materials from the novel that are related to the female characters and can support the analysis of the study. The secondary data were taken from other books, journals, essays, articles, and online sources that provide information on theories and the scope of the study.

The analytical process in the study is conducted in two steps. The first step was applying the theory of character and characterization in analyzing the Penderwick sisters and finding how the characters are portrayed in *The Penderwicks* series. The second step was processing the information that had been gathered in the first step to determine whether or not the characterization of each Penderwick sister is based on their designated characteristic according to their position in the family using Alfred Adler's theory of birth order.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The five main heroines of the series display different characteristics. This can be seen through various dialogues and narrations taken from five books of the series. For example, Rosalind Penderwick is often described as mature for her age. As the eldest, Rosalind is the one that fills in her missing mother's

place for her newborn sister. On the other hand, Skye Penderwick is often described throughout the series as hot-tempered and rebellious. Skye often acted boyish and unfazed by girl-related activities. Jane Penderwick is described as a creative person. She is the writer in the family and often becomes the advocate and spokesperson for the Penderwick sisters. Batty Penderwick, the youngest, is described as the typical shy person and the only one in the Penderwick family with musical talent. The youngest sister, Lydia Penderwick, is described as a dancer in the family. Unlike her fourth sister, Lydia is not shy around strangers.

Knowing that each sister of the Penderwick family is narrated differently in the series, we argue that their dominant characteristics are also different. To prove this argument and to understand the portrayal of the Penderwick sisters better, we applied Murphy's (1972) criteria of characterization. This theory helps to determine the dominant characteristics that are possessed by the Penderwick sisters.

Rosalind Penderwick as the Eldest Child

The eldest child in the Penderwick family is Rosalind Penderwick. Dominant characteristics that Rosalind possesses are motherly, mature, family-oriented, and being a leader. These could be seen from various narrations and dialogues throughout the series. For the eldest child in the family, Adler stated that they might be strict or authoritarian, feel like they have more power compared to their siblings, could act as a parent toward their younger siblings, and could be helpful if encouraged (Adler, 1929, p. 96). Based on Adler's birth order characteristic mentioned in the theoretical framework section above, Rosalind only possesses the last two characteristics: acting as a parent toward their younger siblings and being helpful if encouraged. Rosalind, as the mother figure for her youngest sister, Batty Penderwick, is often illustrated in the series through various narrations and dialogues. This motherly action of hers can be seen even when Mrs. Penderwick is still alive and just gave birth to Batty in the second book of the series, *The Penderwicks on Gardam Street*.

Aunt Claire, their father's sister, carefully handed the baby over to Rosalind, who thought that holding babies was one of the

great joys of life, even when the baby was asleep and didn't know she was being held (Birdsall, 2008, p. 11).

The short passage above indicates Rosalind's love for her newborn sister instead of feeling angry and jealous of her sibling. This is in line with what Adler stated in chapter seven of *Problems of Neurosis: A Book of Case-Histories*, which is the bigger the age gap between the first child and second child, the more mature the first child will react toward the birth of their sibling (Adler, 1929, p. 96).

The second birth order characteristic that Rosalind Penderwick possesses is the first child could be helpful if encouraged. Adler stated that the first child often has to face their parents' high expectations and be given some responsibilities as the eldest in the family (p. 96). Losing her mother at such an early age in her life, Rosalind often helps fill the absence of their mother for her youngest sister, Batty Penderwick, before Mr. Penderwick decides to remarry. Their father, Martin Penderwick, often asks Rosalind's help in taking care of her youngest sibling, Batty. This can be seen throughout the second book of the series, *The Penderwicks on Gardam Street*.

[...] and Rosalind wanted to bake a cake—but first she had to pick up her little sister Batty at Goldie's Day Care. She did so every day on the walk home from school, and even that was part of her happiness. For this was the first year her father had given her responsibility for her sisters after school and until he came home (Birdsall, 2008, p. 18).

Skylar Penderwick as the Second Child

The second child in the family is Skylar Penderwick. As the second child, her dominant characteristics are smart, outgoing, troublemaker, hard-headed and temperamental. The birth order characteristic of the second child in the family might be troublemaker, competitive, hate being compared to their sibling, might be even-tempered, might have trouble finding a place for them in society or become a fighter against injustice. Based on Adler's birth order characteristics mentioned above, Skylar Penderwick only possesses four of the birth order characteristics. The first one is being a troublemaker. Skylar is first described as a troublemaker through Harry the Tomato Man and Rosalind's dialogue in the first book of the series, *The*

Penderwicks: Tale of Four Sisters, Two Rabbits and a Very Interesting Boy.

"Why me?" called Skylar. The man winked at Rosalind. "I can always spot the troublemakers. I was one myself. [...]" (Birdsall, 2005, pp. 6-7).

After Harry said that, Rosalind did not deny it, which was an indirect indication that what he said was true. Still, from the first book, Skylar also often breaks her promise not to enter Mrs. Tifton's garden (2005, p. 21). Skylar also gets herself into trouble in the second book, *The Penderwicks on Gardam Street*, by swapping homework with Jane and cannot handle the pressure of playing the main character in the play based on Jane's work, so she faints in the bathroom (Birdsall, 2008, p. 253).

The second birth order characteristic of Skylar Penderwick that she possesses is competitiveness. Being competitive is not Skylar's dominant characteristic, but this trait is easily found and highlighted in the second book of the series, *The Penderwicks on Gardam Street*. Skylar's competitiveness can be seen when she is playing soccer.

[...] And since the Cameron Hardware captain was the annoying Mellisa Patenaude, who was in Skylar's class at school, and always giggling at their teacher, Mr. Geballe, she had all the more motivation to overwhelm them with a glorious victory (Birdsall, 2008, p. 49).

The short passage above illustrates how willing and eager Skylar is to defeat Melissa. And the last two birth order characteristics that Skylar Penderwick possesses are even-tempered and a fighter against injustice. These birth order characteristics are also related to soccer. Skylar's temperamental attitude was explained in the narration of the second book, *The Penderwicks on Gardam Street*.

In times past, that would have driven Skylar into an insane rage. This was the new Skylar, though, and if she had to pinch her own arm—hard—to keep herself from lunging Melissa, no one knew that but her (Birdsall, 2008, p. 55).

The short passage above indirectly explains that Skylar is well aware of her even-tempered and try to be better at that game. In addition, the sense of fighting against injustice can be seen in Skylar

Penderwick when her family is being hurt by others deliberately.

Just like that, Skye's temper was gone, and she didn't care. For what good was a temper if you couldn't throw it away when your sister was being kneed in the ribs? (Birdsall, 2008, p. 57).

The short passage above perfectly encapsulates the fact that despite bickering with her sisters a lot, Skye Penderwick will always defend her sisters no matter what.

Jane Penderwick as the Middle Child

The third child in the family is Jane Penderwick, and she is the middle child out of six Penderwick siblings. Adler stated that as long as the situation that they face is similar to the second-born child, the born later child, whether they are the third, fourth, fifth child and so on, can be classified using the birth order characteristics of the second child (Adler, 1929, p. 106). Jane Penderwick's dominant characteristics are creative, hardworking, intuitive, and an advocate. The birth order characteristics of the second child in the family include being a troublemaker, competitive, hating being compared to their sibling, might be even-tempered, having trouble finding a place for themselves in society or becoming a fighter against injustice. Based on Adler's birth order characteristics mentioned above, Jane Penderwick only possesses the competitive characteristic. Jane, throughout the story, is often illustrated as spending time alone writing her original stories. Throughout all five books of the series, Jane is also the only older Penderwick sister that had no major character development.

If Rosalind had a major character development from being fearful and not ready to accept the possibility of a stepmother in Book Two of the series, and if Skye finally addressed her self-loathing of the birth of Batty Penderwick due to her belief that Mrs. Penderwick's death was caused by the pregnancy, which later on was dismissed as false in Book Four of the series, Jane Penderwick was the only one left with nothing major happening to her character development, other than being turned down by an older guy named Dominic that the sisters meet when they spend the summer holiday in Point Mouette. Due to this stagnant characterization, the only characteristic of Jane Penderwick that fits

Adler's birth order characteristics is her competitiveness. Jane's competitiveness can be seen from the way she always focuses and is clear with her goal, which is becoming a novelist in the last book of the series, *The Penderwicks at Last*.

[...] She cared only about becoming a great novelist. Everything else was secondary, including love and romance. [...] Another proof of Jane's dedication to writing was her waitressing job. It was hard work, and Jane wasn't particularly good at it, but it gave her money for rent and food, and enough time to work on her novel. Lydia was impressed with her sister's single-minded pursuit of her craft and had great faith in her eventual success. [...] (Birdsall, 2018, p. 10).

The short passage above illustrates Jane's competitiveness to be a successful novelist perfectly. However, other than the competitive characteristic, there is no other Adler's birth order characteristic that fits with the dominant characteristics of Jane Penderwick due to the nature of Adler's theory that is more focused on the bad side and/or characteristics due to the fact that he gained the data from his patients with the unstable and troubled psyche.

Batty Penderwick as the Former Youngest Child

Batty Penderwick is the former youngest child in the Penderwick family before Mr. Penderwick remarries Iantha Aaronson, adding two additional family members: Iantha's son from a previous marriage, Ben Aaronson Penderwick, and the current youngest sibling, Lydia Penderwick. Batty's dominant characteristics throughout the series are shy, loving, smart, secretive and over-thinker. The birth order characteristics of the youngest child in the family might be childish and spoiled, often being dependent on others, trying to be different compared to their family by looking for a field of activity that is remote from the other members of the family and might have trouble finishing their plans. Based on Adler's birth order characteristic mentioned above, Batty Penderwick only possesses the trying to be different compared to their family. This can be seen from the fact that only Batty is the only one pursuing music in her family, and she even studies music in college. In the fourth book of the series, *The Penderwicks in*

Spring, it was revealed that the Penderwick family is not very musical. Mr. Penderwick even says that they sound like a flock of depressed sheep trying to sing a birthday song, except for Batty (Birdsall, 2015, p. 25).

Batty, being the shy one out of all the Penderwick sisters, also does not exhibit a spoiled and entitled personality. This can be proven by the way Batty decided to work an odd job as a dog walker for extra cash instead of demanding her parents right away.

[...] and Batty didn't want to do that, now less than ever. Besides, she was too proud to ask for more money, not with the new car and her sisters' college fees, not to mention the immoderate grocery bills. [...] (Birdsall, 2015, p. 66).

The short passage above shows the consideration she has for her family, her dignity and strong will by trying not to ask for money. Batty was still in fifth grade at the time. However, she showed maturity instead of entitlement that she had to have everything she wanted. Adler's birth order characteristics mention that the youngest in the family often have difficulty finishing their plans (Adler, 1929, p. 107). However, Batty also does not exhibit that mentioned characteristic. Batty is the type of person that knows how to commit to her plans instead of running away from them.

[...] For a moment, Batty considered giving up her piano lessons, exchanging one kind of lesson for another, but no, she couldn't do that. The piano was too important to her, voice or no voice (Birdsall, 2015, p. 66).

This short passage is the perfect evidence that Batty is someone that is committed to things that she loves and finds important and she has no problem with commitment to finish her made plans.

Lydia Penderwick as the Youngest Child

Lydia Penderwick is the youngest child in the Penderwick family, the daughter of Martin Penderwick and Iantha Aaronson Penderwick. The dominant characteristics of Lydia Penderwick are being confident, considerate, outgoing and brave. The birth order characteristics of the youngest child

in the family include being childish and spoiled, often being dependent on others, trying to be different compared to their family by looking for a field of activity that is remote from the other members of the family and might have trouble finishing their plans. Based on Adler's birth order characteristics mentioned above, Lydia also only possesses one birth order characteristic, just like her older sister, Batty Penderwick, that also was the youngest child before the dethronement. The birth order characteristic that Lydia possesses is trying to be different compared to their family. Just like Batty, Lydia is the only Penderwick sister that pursues dancing. Lydia's love for dancing can be seen since she was very little in the fourth book of the series, *The Penderwicks in Spring*.

[...] Even Lydia was there, blissfully dancing through the crowd, her dandelion-bedecked crown bobbling past people's knees (Birdsall, 2015, p. 133).

In the last book, *The Penderwicks at Last*, fifth grader Lydia still loves dancing and even helps to choreograph her sisters' wedding dancing ceremony,

"I'll do it," she said. "But everyone will have to listen to me."

"We'll listen," said Rosalind. "I promise" (Birdsall, 2018, p. 189).

The two short passages above provide direct evidence that Lydia is not just the only one in the family that pursues dancing seriously, but this also proves that Lydia has no trouble finishing her plans because, for years, Lydia still pursues the same thing without giving up midway. Lydia also does not exhibit spoiled characteristics. This can be seen from the way she treats others with compassion in the last book of the series.

"That wasn't me, though," said Lydia. "I wasn't even born when my family was here last time. You don't owe me anything" (Birdsall, 2018, p. 38).

The short passage mentioned above shows that Lydia is not entitled by really believing Alice owes something to her when Alice's parents said that Alice and Lydia should be friends because their family owes the Penderwick family a debt of gratitude.

CONCLUSION

The middle-grade series written by Jeanne Birdsall entitled *The Penderwicks* feature five female main characters which are Rosalind Penderwick, Skye Penderwick, Jane Penderwick, Batty Penderwick and Lydia Penderwick. All five female characters display different dominant characteristics. Only some of the dominant characteristics that the Penderwick sisters possess fit into the birth order characteristics proposed by Adler (1929). Rosalind Penderwick only fits into two out of four birth order characteristics for the eldest child. Those two birth order characteristics include acting as a parent toward their younger siblings and being helpful if encouraged. Skye Penderwick only fits into three out of six birth order characteristics for the second or middle child. Those three birth order characteristics are being troublemaker, competitive and might be even-tempered. Jane Penderwick only fits into one of Adler's birth order characteristics, that is, being competitive. This happens because Adler's theory focuses more on the bad characteristics his patient had. Batty Penderwick only fits into one of Adler's birth order characteristics, that is, 'trying to be different compared to their family members'. This also happens to the youngest Penderwick sister, Lydia Penderwick. This happens because both Batty and Lydia are generally nice children, while Adler's birth order characteristics focus more on the bad characteristics of each child's position in the family.

In conclusion, the characteristics that are possessed by the Penderwick sisters only fit some of the birth order characteristics proposed by Adler. *The Penderwicks* series itself is a series that is well fitted into the middle-grade category, which provides good stories for the targeted readers that parents and teachers can use as teaching material to teach children about everyday things and morals.

REFERENCES

- Adler, A. (1929). *Problems of neurosis: A book of case-histories*. Routledge.
- Birdsall, J. (2005). *The Penderwicks: A summer tale of four sisters, two rabbits, and a very interesting boy*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Birdsall, J. (2008). *The Penderwicks on Gardam Street*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Birdsall, J. (2011). *The Penderwicks at Point Mouette*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Birdsall, J. (2015). *The Penderwicks in spring*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Birdsall, J. (2018). *The Penderwick at last*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Dean, M. E. (2021, Jan 08). *Birth order theory: Insights into your personality*. Retrieved from betterhelp.com/advice/family/birth-order-theory-insights-into-your-personality/
- Dexter, C.A., & Stacks, A. (2014). A preliminary investigation of the relationship between parenting, parent-child shared reading practices, and child development in low-income families. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 28*(3), 394-410. DOI 10.1080/02568543.2014.913278
- Fadiman, C. (2017, Aug 02). *Children's literature*. Retrieved from [britannica.com/art/childrens-literature](https://www.britannica.com/art/childrens-literature)
- Hoffman, E. (1994). *The drive for self: Alfred Adler and the founding of individual psychology*. Addison-Wesley.
- Huebner, C., & Payne K. (2010). Home support for emergent literacy: Follow-up of a community-based implementation of dialogic reading. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 31*(3), 195-201. DOI 10.1016/j.appdev.2010.02.002
- IBISWorld. (2020, May 6). Children's book publishing in the U.S. Retrieved from [ibisworld.com/industry-statistics/market-size/childrens-book-publishing-united-states/](https://www.ibisworld.com/industry-statistics/market-size/childrens-book-publishing-united-states/)
- Maughan, S. (2018, Apr 13). *Navigating middle grade books*. Retrieved from [publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/76625-navigating-middle-grade](https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-industry-news/article/76625-navigating-middle-grade)
- Murphy, M. J. (1972). *Understanding unseen: An Introduction to English poetry and the English novel for overseas students*. HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

National Book Foundation. (n.d.) *The Penderwicks*. Retrieved from nationalbook.org/books/the-penderwicks/

Prajaningtyas, N. B., & Adi, I. R. (2020). Rethinking John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* as children's literature. *Lexicon* 7(2), 171-181. <https://doi.org/10.22146/lexicon.v7i2.66566>.

Saputri, E. (2015). Characteristics of children's literature in Diterlizzi's *Kenny and the Dragon*. *Lexicon* 4(2), 123-128. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22146/lexicon.v4i2.42150>.

Wellek, R., & Warren, A. (1942). *Theory of literature*. Harcourt, Brace and Company.