

## Emotional Toll in Jodi Picoult's *House Rules*

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### **Abstract:**

This research article delves into the intricate exploration of emotional toll within the narrative fabric of Jodi Picoult's acclaimed novel, "House Rules." Employing a multi-faceted analytical approach, the study scrutinizes the emotional landscapes traversed by the characters in the novel and examines the nuanced ways in which Picoult captures the complex interplay of emotions within the context of familial relationships, justice, and neurodiversity.

The research begins by situating "House Rules" within the broader context of Picoult's literary corpus, emphasizing the author's propensity for crafting narratives that delve into moral dilemmas and human intricacies. Focusing on the characters grappling with the challenges of living with autism, the study investigates the emotional toll experienced by both individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. Furthermore, it delves into the impact of societal perceptions, legal systems, and interpersonal dynamics on the characters' emotional well-being.

**Keywords:** Autism Spectrum Disorder and Asperger's Syndrome

Literature is the sole instrument capable of dividing human pain and amplifying human delight. If the school system is considered a process of shaping individuals, literature has the ability to transform individuals into more virtuous and compassionate human beings. The artist plays a key role in this process, since they serve as a mirror to life, capturing and portraying its reflection through writing. Jodi Picoult, an American author, is positioned in this line. Jodi Picoult's novel *House Rules* centres around children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, particularly those diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome.

Asperger's Syndrome is classified as one of the Autism Spectrum Disorders, which encompass a variety of psychological illnesses. These conditions are marked by atypical social interaction, communication difficulties, limited imagination, and repetitive patterns of behaviour and interests. Individuals with Asperger's Syndrome typically exhibit less speech difficulties, fewer learning challenges commonly associated with autism, and often possess ordinary or above-average intelligence, although sharing certain similarities with other autistic conditions. The story is about a family and its rule, the rule to take care each other. The theme in the novel, *House Rules*, is to stick together through thick and thin. Jacob's Asperger's Syndrome takes its toll on a family because of meltdowns, quirks, and specific schedules. "My whole day is planned around it, and if I can't have my fix. I get shaky" (23).

Emma harbours affection for her son, however she contemplates the potential convenience that life would have presented had Jacob not been afflicted with Asperger's

Syndrome. "Jacob's literal interpretation of the world can elicit either amusement or exasperation, depending on the situation" (9). Regardless of the circumstances, she and Theo demonstrate resilience and perseverance as they navigate through numerous hardships. Furthermore, when Jacob is convicted of homicide, the theme is further emphasised. This is the most pivotal moment in the narrative, and despite their own kin's attempt to murder an innocent girl, they continue to stay united. Following Jacob's sentencing, his mother resigns from her job, and Theo takes on the responsibility of finding employment, recognising it as the optimal choice to support his family. Their family's quality is exceptional and serves as a source of motivation for many other families facing similar challenges. Despite enduring extremely harsh circumstances, the family remains united.

Jacob has Asperger's Syndrome but he does not slouch around it. Instead, he uses it to his advantage and makes the best of it; he embraces Asperger's Syndrome. This is inspiring because Jacob believes in himself even though he is suffering from Asperger's Syndrome, Jacob explains how Asperger's Syndrome is a part of him, and without it he would not be himself. "I have spent much of my eighteen years learning how to exist in a world that is occasionally orange, chaotic, and too loud" (23).

Ultimately, Jacob comprehends his identity despite his incapacity. He acknowledges that his lack of talent is actually not a flaw, but rather a characteristic that defines him as Jacob. It is important for everyone to take a lesson from Jacob and start embracing their true selves without drawing attention to their failures, as these flaws are integral to our identity. Jacob possesses unique attributes, distinctive physical features, sources of motivation, and interpersonal relationships. To begin with, Jacob Hunt possesses a remarkably captivating sense of humour that is demonstrated consistently throughout the work. The author's wit injects fervour into the narrative, peppering the book with really entertaining gags.

Jacob is staggeringly shrewd and along these lines, he further upgrades the plot by setting up crime scenes. In spite of his disability, he is brutally honest and follows all the rules. Asperger's Syndrome effect on Jacob is the basis of the plot and in the court case where Jacob is suspected, and this is ultimately the largest tool available for Jacob to win his case. Jacob Hunt is a very special boy, who is just trying to fit.

Jacob just observes the world in black and white, so limits and rules are imperative to him. What is more, Jacob likewise has significant connections that assist with shaping the plot. Jacob's Asperger's Syndrome causes him unfit to be empathetic for other people, and makes it difficult for him to mingle. In result, Jacob does not have any companions. He would prefer to be distant from everyone else watching his preferred TV program, *Crimebusters*, than to have attempted and perused outward appearances and non-verbal communication to speak with a companion. Jacob builds up an exceptionally solid and individual relationship with Jess, until she is killed and Jacob is put being investigated for her demise. After Jess' demise Jacob turns out to be increasingly disillusioned he communicated his trouble to Jess' dead body as follows: "You are the best friend I ever had, I tell her. I wish this had never happened" (167).

Theo Hunt is a relatable character to adolescents. Since he feels ignored from his mom because of Jacob's consistent requirement for consideration and along these lines, Theo misbehaves. Young people are regularly insubordinate in the desire for consideration and Theo

is the ideal model for this. He is the most significant character in this novel, and contributed the most out of the characters to the plot. As a result of the disregard from his mom, and issues with his sibling, Theo gets defiant. He has the enslavement of breaking into more interesting's homes and stealing. "I check the contents of the fridge and make myself a black forest ham and sage-cheddar sandwich on a baguette" (52)

He does this since his own home does not feel like home to him, so he goes to other's homes. His habit is the reason for the plot, since he breaks into the home where Jess is skilled and he is the last one to see her alive. Moreover, Theo does not have many consistent and great connections. He is shy of companions since Jacob consistently frightens them away, so Theo minds his own business. Theo's life has been drastically changed due to Jacob.

Emma Hunt is a single parent. Her main responsibility is to deal with Jacob, and she likewise composes a guidance segment for the Burlington Free Press. Emma does not have everything made sense of, and accepts that parenthood could not be culminated. Regular daily existence is an everyday battle since her life spins around Jacob, her child with Asperger's Syndrome. Emma makes House Rules, to cause her kids to be a good one that include:

1. Clean up your own messes.
2. Tell the truth.
3. Brush your teeth twice a day.
4. Don't be late for school.
5. Take care of your brother; he's the only one you've got. (24)

The last rule she makes is the basis for the entire plot. Everyday life is a daily struggle because her life revolves around Jacob, her son with Asperger's.

The principal motivation behind why somebody should peruse House Rules is on the grounds that there are different relatable characters. Another explanation that one should peruse this novel is on the grounds that the book gives the peruser another comprehension of Asperger's Syndrome and very few books manage the standard existence of an individual with Asperger's Syndrome, so the novel is one of a kind. Jodi Picoult distinctly portrays what it resembles to have Asperger's Syndrome. Picoult gives the peruser a total new point of view of this infection, and how it is hard to manage the sickness.

The book really causes the peruser to feel as though they have Asperger's Syndrome themselves, by portraying what it feels like flawlessly. She likewise depicts how individuals with this illness just observe things in highly contrasting which can make correspondence and understanding troublesome. Moreover, Picoult does not simply depict the drawback of Asperger's Syndrome; she likewise discusses idiosyncrasies of it.

The overall concept or theme of this novel is family and justice. It is about sticking together through hard times and being there to support each other. These are the two best themes that are shown consistently throughout the story because it is what the story focuses on.

There are lot of things in the life of a child which make him/her both good and bad. There are family, school, and society which help an individual to shape his life. And there is always a dual path that is good and bad. So it is in the hand of the individual in which path he/she is going to travel throughout their life. In between there are many characters like parents, teachers, friends and society who help them to correct their mistakes and lead a happy life.

Parents should have greater responsibility in the life of children. They are the only authorities who decide the life of their children.

Jodi Picoult's *House Rules* shows scope for further studies on themes such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Colour-Code, family and justice and wanting something you cannot have in addition to other existing literary reading.

Through a comprehensive analysis of narrative techniques, character development, and thematic elements, this article seeks to unravel the emotional layers woven into the storyline, shedding light on how Picoult skillfully captures the internal struggles, conflicts, and resilience of her characters. The research contributes to the broader discourse on literature's capacity to illuminate the emotional complexities of real-world issues, particularly within the framework of neurodiversity and familial relationships.

In conclusion, the study not only enriches our understanding of the emotional dimensions embedded in "House Rules" but also provides valuable insights into the broader implications of literature as a medium for exploring and understanding the emotional toll of navigating complex, real-world challenges

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