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## The Theme of Obstacles Overcoming in Children Literature

“Obstacles are those frightful things you see when we take your eyes off your goals,” wrote Henry Ford. Everyone is different, but we all have obstacles. We need to never give up, but instead stay focused on the journey and direction to keep on going. The variety of general early childhood texts reveal nothing is impossible, obstacles are just opportunities.

From the book, *Where The Sidewalk Ends*, Shel Silverstein short poem, “Listen to the Mustn’ts,” majority of the text is about limitation, but at the end of the poem with an empathetic whisper it expresses how possibilities are endless. In the beginning of the poem, “Listen to the Mustn’ts,” Silverstein explores the restrictions that are depicted in our world:

Listen to the MUSTN'TS, child,

Listen to the DON'TS

Listen to the SHOULDN'TS

The IMPOSSIBLES, the WON'TS

Listen to the NEVER HAVES

The uppercase words are vitally important at the beginning of this poem, conveying the idea how numerous limitations are expressed throughout everyday life. As the poem continues, Silverstein finishes the poem by writing, “Then listen close to me- / Anything can happen, child, / ANYTHING can be”. The ending of the poem overpowers the beginning by the confident whisper. The speaker of this poem is someone from experience. The significance of the speaker and the words used suggest how to see opportunity where others see obstacles. This poem, “Listen to the Mustn’ts,” supports the idea that anything can happen; obstacles are not a reason to give up just a chance for something else.

In the early childhood chapter book, *Owl Diaries: Eva’s Treetop Festival*, by Rebecca Elliot Eva is about an owl who just wants to throw a successful Bloomtastic Festival for her class. Eva has different hurdles she has to overcome throughout the story, but in the end all of her hard work pays off. After Eva’s teacher, Miss Featherbottom, liked her idea about the festival; Eva goes to tell her best friend, Lucy, about her excitement and worries. Eva is at a loss for where she will start and how to get everything done in time. Lucy responds with, “Make a to-do list. Then you’ll know what you need to get done”. Instead of looking at this as a problem, the author is

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showing how there are solutions because nothing is impossible. Throughout the story, Eva has challenges with one of her classmates, Sue. As Eva is presenting her idea to the class, Sue chimes in, “What are YOU in charge, Eva? Who made you festival queen?”. As a result of this, Eva finishes up her thoughts, nervously, with her class. She just wishes Sue would mind her own business. As the stories continues on, Eva realizes all of this work is entirely a lot to take on alone; she is not sure how she will get it done until the next day. “Then I thought about what Miss Featherbottom had said when I first told her my idea. Share the work!”). Eva did just what Miss Featherbottom had suggested. A message being conveyed here is when obstacles arise find a way to solve it, and sometimes solving the issue does not mean doing it alone. In the act of Eva asking her classmates for help meant she needed Sue’s help on the fashion runway, “I could not believe that Sue said yes. She even smiled at me. Kind of. Then she helped me build the runway after school”. At the end of the festival, all of Eva’s determined work was a success, “We all took turns holding the trophy. Miss Featherbottom smiled. Everyone HOOTED and cheered! Even Sue!”. Not everything in life will be easy, but in the end the focus will be worth it. The Bloomtastic Festival symbolizes achievement is possible. Rebecca Elliot uses the story, Owl Diaries: Eva’s Treetop Festival, to demonstrate focus is essential in achieving goals, since nothing is impossible.

Looking into the fairytale, “Snow White,” by Brothers Grimm, it’s about the beautiful Snow White herself. Snow White is on a continual run from her stepmother, the Queen, who is full of hatred towards Snow White. The Queen envied Snow White for her beauty; so it became her mission to do everything she could to kill Snow White. The huntsman obeyed orders from the Queen to go kill Snow White, “...she began weeping and pleading with him. ‘Alas, dear huntsman, spare my life. I promise to run into the woods and never return’”. Snow White knew she was about to die, so she chose to try to beg the huntsman to keep her alive. She took this horrible situation and found a solution. She took off into the woods taking herself to safety. She came upon a cottage where she went in and made herself at home. As night time came, the seven dwarfs returned to their cottage to find Snow White sleeping. They were so fond of her; they waited until morning to introduce themselves. When morning came Snow White shared her situation with the dwarfs, “Then she told them how her stepmother had tried to kill her and that the huntsman had spared her life. She had run all day long until she arrived at their cottage”. The seven dwarfs welcomed Snow White into their house as long as she kept up with everything around the house. She was filled with pleasure. Snow White made the best of her circumstances. She turned her obstacle into an opportunity of a new home and new friends. Throughout the fairy tale, the Queen continuously tries to kill Snow White. In the end, Snow White lives through it all and is filled with joy as she meets her prince, “Snow White had tender feelings for him, and she departed with him. Their marriage was celebrated with splendor”. From all of the obstacles Snow White went through, she did not let it stop her from finding ways to fill her life with joy. No matter how much pain and hate the Queen had for her, Snow White always continued striving forward.

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These early childhood texts all portray messages that nothing is impossible, obstacles appear to be opportunities. This theme is consistently demonstrated in these stories. It is so realistic throughout these writings and how situations are handled. It is apparent how these readings suggest early childhood children can see opportunities. Unfortunately, as adults we may only see the obstacles without the view or thinking nothing is impossible with the right perspective. Early childhood development do not fully understand the meaning of attitude. They have a determination and outlook of persevering, nothing appears impossible in their perspective.

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