Room – Character Questions – Ma

**Q: “Although Jack is the narrator, Ma is the real hero of Room”. Do you agree with this statement? Support your answer with reference to the text.**

Based on my reading of the novel “Room” by Emma Donoghue, I think that Ma is the real hero of “Room”. What we see with the character Ma is a selfless and loving mother. Ma does her best to care for Jack in incredibly difficult circumstances. She educates him, plays with him and showers him with love. Food is precious in Room, but Jack says that when they eat a tub of mandarins, he gets “the big bits because she prefers the little bits”. When they run low on food and there is only one bagel left, Ma only has a quarter of it and lets Jack believe she is “not very hungry”. Jack means everything to Ma and she always puts his needs before hers. When the interviewer on the chat show suggests that she was selfish for not asking Old Nick to leave Jack at a hospital and to give him the chance to be adopted and live a normal life, Ma is so devastated that she attempts to take her own life shortly afterwards.

 Ma is also a hero to me as she struggles with depression but still manages to survive. In Room, Jack says there are days when Ma is “Gone”, meaning she is so depressed that she cannot get out of bed or speak. When Ma is in the clinic, she attempts suicide by taking a drug overdose. Ma says that Jack’s birth gave her a sense of purpose, but there are times when she is overwhelmed by her situation. After all, she was kidnapped, raped and held captive for seven years. Eventually, the doctors find the right balance of medication to help her cope, and she has continuing support from Dr Clay.

 Ma is also my hero as she is more damaged by her experiences than she first realises. Ma longs for freedom but it is not all she had hoped for. In Room she was just “Ma”, but now she is a person in her own right again and has to behave in a way that is seen as normal by society. For example, she still breastfeeds Jack and becomes angry and upset when others find this unacceptable. She has moments where she finds Jack’s demands too much. She tells him “I keep messing up. I know you need me to be your ma but I’m having to remember to be me at the same time”. Ma finds it harder to adjust to freedom than she had imagined. She is not the same person she was when she was kidnapped and she simply can not pick up the pieces of her old life. Moving into her own apartment signals a new beginning for Ma. For all these reasons, Ma is my hero of the novel “Room”.