

AN ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CHARACTER INFLUENCE IN THE PLOT OF THE MOVIE “FREEDOM WRITERS”

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ABSTRAK

Gruwell and students who compiled the book out of real diary entries about their lives that they wrote in their English class at Woodrow Wilson Classical High School in Long Beach, California. The purpose of this study is to identify the main character influences in the plot of the movie: Erin Gruwell in ‘Freedom Writers’. To examine the influences in the plot, two problems appear in this study. The first is “What types of plot structure used in the movie?” The second is “How the conflicts of the main character influence the plot of the movie?” To answer these problems, the researcher used content analysis as the method of the study. The primary data of this study was the movie and the supporting data of this study are books and journals. This movie uses Linear plot. It is also known as progressive plot. Is a kind of plot shows a chronological structure which first establishes the setting and the character of the story, then follows the rising actions through to a climax or conflict of the story, then concludes by the resolution. The writer considers that the raising action and falling action were influenced by the conflict of the main character. If Erin listen to her father to run for major cooperation she would not divorced by her husband but class 203 will not change if Erin not their teacher. The researcher hopes this study can add knowledge on the main character influence in a piece of literacy work to the readers.

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INTRODUCTION

Many people read and watch literature for pleasure, while the others do it to satisfy academic requirements. Meanwhile, the use of literature in education, especially for English foreign learners is very central since literature provides authentic properties of target language, culture and increases critical thinking of humans Zorba (2012). Nowadays, as humans live in the globalization era, most people love enjoying literature in a kind of movie or film. Watching a movie makes people more inspired and enjoy the art of literature. In addition, watching a movie develops the imagination of the people. People can experience the conflict and some parts of the film directly by watching the movies visually.

People really care about characters that make up the story and bring the literary art to be interesting. Characters are the most important thing in a literary work, especially in a story. In a movie, characters are the actors and actresses who play in a movie. They have significant roles in the story. The interesting movie or not depends on how the characters play their role in a movie based on the script they got. Alfano (2013) explained that “ characters are identified as virtues by normative theories” . This theory evaluates the ways of being and behaving that is impossible for humans to make it real then to inevitable moral failure its prescription. This theory believed that a character is a significant thing of literature since characters show ways of being or behaving in good or bad roles. It is really needed in a story. It determines whether a story is a good and interesting story or not. Furthermore, Alfano (2013) stated that the action that is done by the characters and the sequences may be good or bad. The interesting things are the interferences which can be drawn about the characters on the basis of the action and consequences.

Every play has certain elements. Like other literary works, the movie has characters, setting, plot, conflict, and theme. Most of the story is shown through the dialogue spoken by the characters which are the people or animals who take part in a scene. It can be portrayed in two ways. Those are direct characterization and indirect characterization. Direct characterization appears when the movie or drama tells people how a character looks, acts, and thinks. Furthermore, in the appearance of the characterization, there should happen a dialog which is a conversation between two or more characters. This dialogue will show the characterization of the actors and actresses and will bring a certain conflict toward the movie. Jaeckle (2013) explained that “ dialogues develop the appreciation of the character in a story, including movies” . In addition, in a story like a movie, it has two kinds of conflict, external and internal conflict. External conflict shows characters struggling against an outside force, while internal conflict shows how characters battle a force within herself or himself.

This study focus on how the main character influences the plot's events through her choices and decisions. Her goals play a crucial role in determining the events that unfold in the story, when faced with a certain situation, may react externally according to how they feel about what is taking place internally. The characters' reactions then cause the next plot point or event.

A character plays the role of an impression, even sometimes indistinct, but it is clear, as when it arises from a real person. He continued that the characters are always related to conflict, desire, fear and shame, pride and love. It makes a story to be more subtle, complex, emotionally engaging, and dramatically interesting Corbett (2013).

Dipple (2017) stated that “in analyzing a movie, there should be minimal plot and character” . Those are related to each other in a story. Plot is the sequence of events in a story. Plot in a story is very significant for it shows the events, conflict, and makes a movie interesting. For example, flashbacks which disrupt the linear movement of the plot to show earlier actions are presented in many stories. Furthermore, whatever the plot of a story may be, the writer or the director has arranged and ordered the actions or events with a view both to the whole meaning and to the responses of the reader or people who enjoy the literary work. To appreciate this plot that has been ordered by the writer, people should be conscious of the experiences in reading and enjoying the story and people should be curious of what they think and feel at different points.

The stories, whether it is a movie or other short stories, were ranked for plot in different ranks. Those are excellent, good, fair and poor. An excellent story shows that the reader or the one who enjoys literary work understands the point of the story by presenting a deep understanding of the plot. They should be able to know and remember the details of the story, the right details. Furthermore, a good story shows that people listen to the story and are able to recall the main actions or events in the plot of the story. A fair story shows that people miss more than one event of the story and lack understanding of the story, they miss the important part of the plot in a story. A poor story has certain troubles with recall of events, and missing a substantial amount of the plot. Moreover, to be a good reader and a good consumer of literary work, such a movie, people should have a good understanding about the events of the story and the meaning of a story.

The meaning of a story involves many factors to be considered. On a basic level, a story should be built based on two events which are shown in a temporal and causal sequence. Thus, these temporal and causal sequences are exactly the founding members of a set of story relations. A story, such a movie evokes a story world which is told involving at least two time states, events which happen during the time stated and a functional relationship between those events Elson (2012).

Film or movie is a type of art that can be used as a learning medium. Education through movie can be used as a learning method in literacy education. If we look at the progress of technology and the film industry have been very successful in attracting the interest of the younger generation to watch films. We can use this opportunity to improve their skill in mastering English as well as to broaden their knowledge about literature, despite of literary elements, movie also gives inspiration, suggestion, and motivation.

From the background of the study above, the writer formulates research problems as follows.

1. What types of plot structures are used in the movie?
2. How does the main character influences the plot of the movie?

The research is intended to obtain the following objectives:

1. To find out the types of plot structure used in the movie.
2. To find how far the influence of the main character's toward the plot of the movie.

METHOD

The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method. Qualitative research method is a certain tradition in social science which fundamentally depends on the person and his surroundings through his language. The results of qualitative research are descriptive rather than predictive. Mason (2002, p.199) stated that qualitative is an analysis, explanation and argument building method which involves understanding of complexity, detail and context. The purpose of this method is to produce rounded and contextual understandings on the basis of rich, nuanced, and detailed data. Since the data of this research is in the form of a word which is transcribed from A Brilliant Young Mind movie, this research used a descriptive-qualitative method.

According to Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault (2015, p.7-11), a qualitative method is more than a set of data gathering techniques, it is a way of empirical world approach. Qualitative method has some features. First, it is concerned with the meaning that people attach to things. It focuses on the phenomenological perspective and understands people from their reference frame and experiences things as they experience in reality. Qualitative researchers identify and empathize with the people they study to know and understand people's perspective about the things. A qualitative researcher should set aside their own perspective and see things as if it is their first experience for them. Second, qualitative research is inductive where the researcher develops concept, insight, and understanding from the patterns of the data rather than collecting the data to evaluate models, hypotheses, or theories. In addition, in qualitative research, all perspectives are worthy to study. This method focuses on the meaningfulness of the research and the researchers are the key instrument of the research.

A. Material of Analysis

The source of the main data of this research is taken from the dialogue of *Freedom Writers* movie which has a duration of two hours and three minutes. All verbal signs

including the words, phrases, sentence and non-verbal signs which include gestures or body language and any symbols used by the main character are the research data.

B. Technique of Data Collection

The data of the research are collected by doing the following steps:

- a. Watching the film twice or more is very important. In watching it, the researcher applies a comprehensive strategy which means that the researcher watches carefully in order to understand the plot and meaning in every section of the movie. To understand and gain meaning, the researcher watches the movie many times.
- b. Identifying film to find the data related to the study. The researcher identifies and writes the data based on the dialogue and scenes of the movie which are related to the main character's conflict and plot to make it easy to classify the data.
- c. Classification data. In writing the related data, the researcher also writes which part of the movie, in what duration, the data is found to make it easy in finding the data.
- d. Selecting the relevant data. In selecting the data, the researcher read the theories which are written in chapter two to make sure whether the data were applicable to the theory or not. In addition, it is to confirm that the sorted data were based on the theory.
- e. Reporting selected data. After data was selected, the researcher reported the data descriptively in paragraph

C. Technique of Data Analysis

Since the method used is descriptive qualitative, the researcher used textual analysis since the data are from the dialogues and words. Vanderstop and Johnston (2008, p.210) explained that textual analysis is about the identification and interpretation of verbal and nonverbal signs. The data which were taken are categorized into conflict, elements of plot, and plot structure. The writer will analyze them by watching and reading the transcript of the movie, then describing and presenting it descriptively. The writer will use the theory explained in chapter two in presenting the data of the research.

D. Synopsis of 'Freedom Writers'

The storyline of the movie takes place between 1992-1995, beginning with scenes from the 1992 Los Angeles Riots. Hilary Swank plays the role of Erin Gruwell, a new, excited schoolteacher who leaves the safety of her hometown, Newport Beach, to teach at Woodrow Wilson High School in Long Beach, a formerly high achieving school which has recently had an integration program put in place. Her enthusiasm is quickly challenged when

she realizes that her class are all "at-risk" students, also known as "unteachables", and not the eager students she was expecting. The students segregate themselves into racial groups in the classroom, fights break out, and eventually most of the students stop turning up to class. Not only does Gruwell meet opposition from her students, but she also has a hard time with her department head, who refuses to let her teach her students with books in case they get damaged and lost, and instead tells her to focus on teaching them discipline and obedience.

One night, two students, Eva (April Lee Hernández), a Hispanic girl and narrator for much of the film, and a Cambodian refugee, Cindy (Jaclyn Ngan), find themselves in the same convenience store. Another student, Grant Rice (Armand Jones) is frustrated at losing an arcade game and demands a refund from the owner. When he storms out, Eva's boyfriend attempts a drive-by shooting, wanting to kill Grant but misses, accidentally killing Cindy's boyfriend. As Eva is a witness, she must testify at court; she intends to protect her own kind in her testimony.

At school, Gruwell intercepts a racist drawing of one of her students and uses it to teach them about the Holocaust. She gradually begins to earn their trust and buys them composition books to record their diaries, in which they talk about their experiences of being abused, seeing their friends die, and being evicted. Determined to reform her students, she takes two part-time jobs to pay for more books and spends more time at school, to the disappointment of her husband (Patrick Dempsey). Her students start to behave with respect and learn more. A transformation is especially visible in one of her students, Marcus (Jason Finn). She invites several Holocaust survivors to talk with her class about their experiences and takes them on a field trip to the Museum of Tolerance. Meanwhile, her unorthodox teaching methods are scorned by her colleagues and department chair Margaret Campbell (Imelda Staunton).

The next year comes, and Gruwell teaches her class again for sophomore (second) year. In class, when reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*, they invite Miep Gies (Pat Carroll), the woman who sheltered Anne Frank from the German soldiers to talk to them. After they raise the money to bring her over, she tells them her experiences hiding Anne Frank. When Marcus tells her that she is his hero, she denies it, claiming she was merely doing the right thing. Her denial causes Eva to rethink lying during her testimony. When she testifies, she finally breaks down and tells the truth, much to some of her family members' dismay. Meanwhile, Gruwell asks her students to write their diaries in book form. She compiles the entries and names it *The Freedom Writers Diary*.

Her husband divorces her and Margaret tells her she cannot teach her kids for their junior year. She fights this decision, eventually convincing the superintendent to allow her to teach her kids' junior and senior year. The film ends with a note that Gruwell successfully brought many of her students to graduation and college.

DISCUSSION

A. *Plot Structure in Freedom Writers*

This movie uses Linear plot. It is also known as progressive plot. As explained in the previous chapter that This kind of plot shows a chronological structure which first establishes the setting and the character of the story, then follows the rising actions through to a climax or conflict of the story, then concludes by the resolution. In minutes 04.00, it presents introduction of the main character. It shows Erin gets job at Woodrow High school, which has recently put an Integration program.

The Rising Action first started in minutes 08.30, Erin enthusiastic is challenged when she realized that her students are all “at risk” high school students, who were deemed unteachable. In minutes 29.00, Erin finds a racist drawing of one of the student and uses it to teach them about the Holocaust after asked by one of the student. In minute 37.27 Erin have a difficult time with her head department, who refuse to let her teach student with books. In minute 39.22 Erin ask for support from her colleague Mr. Brian in order to borrow a book to teach her class, he adamantly refuse to help since to him Erin class do not deserve to learn in Woodrow High school.

The Rising Action followed to 45.43 after Erin asked few questions related to the student lives, she gave them a book to write the diaries and in the durations 49.20 she read the diaries and learns the hardship and difficult lives all the student have to lived. In duration 1.10.05 Erin makes her class do a “Toast of Change” which allowed the student to open up their struggles and how they attempt to change.

Climax of the movie happened in 1.31.40 Eva, at the trial break down and testifies against her boyfriend which anger her family and communities, this however proved that Erin success in teaching her students tolerance. In the following duration 1.36.27 the students become more spirited and connected in classroom and become a new family.

Falling action start in duration 1.38.21 when Erin arrived home, she shocked when her husband divorces her since he feels Erin devoting too much of her time to her students and not enough for their marriage. In duration 1.43.24 the student realize that they will not be

taught by her next year and in 1.50.46 Erin give announcement that she did not have permit to teach them again next year even after she tried her best to get the permit.

Near the end of the movie after Erin put together her students journal to create the freedom writers book, she also announce that she have the permit to teach her student in junior and senior year. The movie and with a note that Erin Gruwell successfully prepared numerous high school students to graduate and attend college.

B. *The Influence of The Main Character's Towards Plot in FREEDOM WRITERS*

A detail discussion is needed for a complete analysis of the variable which is the main character and the plot. Therefore, in this study, the writer tries to find out the influence of the variable.

After analyzing the characters, the main character and the plots, the writer found that they supported each other. Based on the title of this research, there are influences of the main characters toward plot. Sequences of the plot prove that the conflict mainly derive from the main character ways in solving problem.

Erin problem start on her first day teaching. For example, the first time she attend the class, her student arrive late and ignoring her, and when Erin tried to borrow a book for her class in order to teach, her head department Margaret Campbell refuse to let her take the book even her colleague Brian Gelford refuse to help.

Erin conflict with her students start when she realized that her student involve in various gangs when the gang war break out near the school. There she realized all the students she teach will be very likely become criminal if she fails to educated them.

Erin conflict with her students escalated when Tito drew a picture of Jamal in that paper, it makes his group laugh the moment the picture reach Jamal. When Erin saw Tito and his group are laughing in the back and the picture in Jamal hand she was angry and start telling them about what gang really is.

Erin : you think you all know about gangs? You're amateurs. This gang would put you all to shame. And they start out poor and angry, and everybody looked down on them. Until one man decided to give them some pride, an identity and somebody to blame. You take over neighborhood? that's nothing compare to them. They took down countries. You wanna know how? They just wipe out everybody else.

Students : yeah yeah.

Erin : yeah, they wipe out everybody they didn't like, and everybody they blame for their life being hard, and one of the ways they did it was by doing this. See they print out pictures like this in the newspaper.

Jewish people with big long nose. Blacks with big fat lips. They also publish scientific evidence that proved jews and blacks were they lowest life forms in human species. Jews and black were more like animals. And because they were like animals it didn't really matter whether they live or die. In fact, life would be a whole lot better if were all dead. That's how holocaust happens, and that's what you all think of each other.

The conflict above is a beginning of the Raising action of the plot which contains several disagreement between Erin and her student especially for Marcus, Andre and Eva. According to them she does not know anything of what they have experience, and when Erin switch back to the drawing Eva snapped.

- Erin** : Right, right. It start with a drawing like this, and then some kiddies in a drive by, never ever knowing what hit him.
- Eva** : You don't know nothing! You don't know what we feel. You don't know what we got to do. You got no respect for how we living. You got us in here, teaching us about this grammar shit and then we got to go out there again. And what are you telling me about that , huh? What are you doing in here that make a goddamn difference to my life?
- Erin** : You don't feel respected. Is that what you are saying, Eva? Well maybe you're not. But to get respect, you have to give it.
- Andre** : That's bullshit!
- Erin** : What?
- Andre** : why should I give my respect to you? 'cause you're a teacher? I don't know you. How do I know you're not a liar standing up there? How do I know you're not a bad person standing up there? I'm not gonna give you my respect because you're called a teacher.
- Eva** : white people always wanting their respect like they deserve it for free
- Erin** : I'm a teacher doesn't matter what color I am.
- Eva** : It's all about color. It's about people deciding what you deserve, about people wanting what they don't deserve, about whites thinking they run this world no matter what. You see, I hate white people.

After what happen in classroom Erin tried to get a book to tell her about holocaust event which denied by her head department. In the next day she play the line game with her student to find out how far they involve in gang, how much they have lost. At the end in order to understand what her student experience she decided to give them a book to write about their daily life and their past as an assignment.

The falling action happen right after Erin successfully change her student perspective of each other, when she got home her husband decide to divorce her since she cares more about her student then her marriage.

The plot is ended after Erin put together her students journal to create the freedom writers book, she also announce that she have the permit to teach her student in junior and

senior year and with a note that Erin Gruwell successfully prepared numerous high school students to graduate and attend college.

The writer considers that the raising action and falling action were influenced by the conflict of the main character. If Erin listen to her father to run for major cooperation she would not divorced by her husband but class 203 will not change if Erin not their teacher.

CONCLUSION

The writer focuses on the influence of the main character's towards plot in the movie. Hence, the writer finds several conclusions from the analysis. First, the main character of *freedom writer* movie is Erin Gruwell, a new English teacher in room 203 of Woodrow high school. Second, as any other story, the movie has five elements of plot which is connected each other. Those are exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution or denouncement. Generally, the movie uses the linear plot as the plot structure of the story. it can be seen since the movie events happen chronologically.

Thirdly, the main character experiences both internal and external conflicts influence the plot of the movie. The conflict is that the first time she comes to teach none will shows up to her class, if the student not being escorted by the security. She tries so hard to change her student ways of thinking, even though her head department and her colleague refuse to help and undermine her determination to change her student.

After analyzing the plots, the writer concluded that they supported each other. Based on the title of this research, there are influences of the main characters toward plot. Sequences of the plot prove that the conflicts mainly derive from the main characters.

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