

THE ANTIHERO IN CHBOSKY'S *THE PERKS OF BEING*

A WALLFLOWER MOVIE

***Dinda Siti Rodiyanti Pane**

****Sri Minda Murni**

ABSTRACT

This study deals with the antihero in Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* movie. The objectives of this study are to find out antihero characterizations of the main character and to describe the author's ways to present antihero characterizations. Descriptive qualitative method was applied in analyzing the data and documentary technique was used in order to help collect the data related to the topic. The analysis shows that Charlie Kelmeckis as the main character of the movie is considered as an antihero as he owns four antihero characterizations; (a) Passive, (b) Dishonest, (c) Lonely, (d) Fragile. In presenting those characterizations, the author used telling method and showing method.

Keywords: *Antihero, Antihero Characterizations, Characterization Methods, Chbosky's The Perks of Being a Wallflower Movie*

*Graduate Status

** Lecturer Status

INTRODUCTION

In general, typical movie characters are expected to give strong impression and clear images to the audiences. Besides, people tend to like good characterizations of the main character that can motivate them to do better in real life. This makes protagonists the heroes as they frequently gain the victory from the antagonists. Nevertheless, not all filmmakers use those positive traits in presenting characterizations of their movie characters. There are also characters that even do not show any characteristics of the heroes that are called antiheroes.

Having far criteria from a hero does not turn all literary characters to be villains and criminals. In some relevant studies about antihero, the antiheroes that were analyzed are all characters with bad characterizations even though some characters have gone to be better characters in the end of the story. As written by Sternbergh (2013) in his article which discusses about television antiheroes, the character of Walter White and Tony Soprano are the antiheroes who live on the wrong side of the law and who are willing to bend moral rules in order to achieve their ends. They are often typically killers with a code even if it is one that they themselves struggle to abide by.

This actually would result interchangeably use in public opinion and literature students' perception about antihero and villain. The portrayal of antiheroic character in literary works, especially in movies, should not evoke misinterpretation as its presence is intended to deliver message from the author. Moreover, antiheroic characterizations of main characters are not the exact and the only characterizations because they might have other characterizations that do not belong to their antihero character. However, to discuss more characterizations will be out of the context of antihero.

The researcher was interested to study this topic because the character of an antihero is often connected with the figures of villains only. Antiheroes may portray moral ambiguity as a result of having contradictory characterizations from a hero. As Kadiroğlu states in his journal, *A Genealogy of Antihero*, an antihero might not have high moral standards. Unlike traditional principle character of mythology, folklore or legends, he also might be indecent. Yet, there must be a good side in an antihero that makes him the main role of a story. There are certain messages or moral lessons that the author wants to implicitly extend.

In this study, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* movie (2012) was chosen as the object because the movie deals with main character that does not have heroic traits as most traditional hero would have. In addition, the antihero analyzed in this study is a character that is not portrayed as a bad guy or a villain. This is based on Abrams's point of view (1999) that defines antihero as the chief person whose character is widely differed from the traditional protagonist of hero. Besides, instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power, or heroism, the antihero is petty, ignominious, passive, ineffectual, or dishonest.

The research questions of this study are; What antihero characterizations are found from the main character in Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* movie? And how are antihero characterizations presented by the author of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* movie?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Antihero

Abrams (1999: 11) defines an antihero as the chief person in a modern novel or play whose character is widely differed from the traditional protagonist of hero or a serious literary work. If a hero owns typically positive traits like using his bravery or strength as the ones who are found in old epic stories, an antihero will not use those deeds heroically or even does not have any of those traits. The figure of an antihero might show outrights manners or nothing to be proud of.

This makes antihero as the main character in a story that does not have the qualities of a typical hero.

Antihero Characterizations

An antihero often reflects society's confusion and ambivalence about morality. Abrams (1999: 11) states that the antihero is petty, ignominious, passive, ineffectual, or dishonest instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power, or heroism. In an article *Defining and Developing Your Anti-Hero* (2008), an antihero can also be an outsider. As a loner, this antihero often possesses a fragile self-esteem, has often failed at love, and is sometimes estranged from people from his past. Based on the explanation above, the characterizations of an antihero can be concluded as follows (Hornby: 2010)

- a. Petty : Caring too much about small and unimportant matters, especially when this is unkind to other people. (2010: 1130)
- b. Ignominious: What makes or should make you feel ashamed. (2010: 771).
- c. Passive : Accepting what happens or what people do without trying to change anything or oppose them. (2010: 1107)
- d. Ineffectual : Without the ability to achieve much; weak; not achieving what you want to. (2010: 793)
- e. Dishonest : Not honest; intending to trick people. (2010: 438)
- f. Fragile : Weak and uncertain; easily destroyed or spoiled. (2010: 615)
- g. Lonely : Unhappy because you have no friends or people to talk to. (2010: 905)

Characterization Methods

According to Abrams (1999: 33-34), there are two methods of characterizing; they are telling method and showing method.

a. Telling Method

In telling method, the author directly intervenes to describe and often to evaluate the motives and the qualities of the characters. By using this method, the

character emerges with direct description given by the author. The author also enables to reveal characterizations by expressive statements by apparently introducing the setting and the atmosphere of the story in some sequence of descriptive explanation. Nonetheless, there is a weakness of this method. As stated by Nurgiyantoro (1999: 197), this method makes the readers seem inactive to generate ideas and not encouraged to put up their perspectives imaginatively toward the works. In short, the readers are not directly aroused to involve actively in understanding the characters.

b. Showing Method

In showing method or dramatic method, the author presents the characterizations by means of characters' talking and actions and leaves the readers or the audiences to assume the motives lying behind what characters say and do. Abrams (1999: 34) suggests that the author may show not only external speech and actions, but also character's inner thoughts, feelings, and responsiveness to events. The five types of showing methods can be seen as follows:

1. Speech

This method shows what the main character says and what other characters say about him or her. What the character says provides a great deal of insight for the reader even though not all statements which are able to indicate certain characterizations.

2. Action

This method shows what the character does or behaves during the story. Through this action method, the author can show how good or bad certain character's attitude is.

3. Thoughts and Feelings

This method shows what the characters think and feel. Through this thoughts and feelings methods, the readers or the audiences can discover things

about their personalities which sometimes help understand the character's action.

4. Responsiveness to Events

This method shows character's reaction to any events which occur in the story. It shows how character responds what happens to him or her such as conflicts, situation, and other characters reaction to him or her.

5. Stream of Consciousness

This method shows character's self awareness toward themselves. Abrams (1999: 299) also adds that this method undertakes the continuous flow of a character's mental process, in which sense perceptions mingle with conscious and half-conscious thoughts, memories expectations, feelings, and random associations.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted by applying a descriptive qualitative method. Kothari (2004: 3) states that a qualitative research is concerned with the qualitative phenomenon, for example a phenomena relating to or involving quality or kind. The data were collected from *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* movie and the technique used was documentary technique. This technique is the ways to get information by reading all references in order to collect related data. The steps were downloading the movie script, watching the movie, and collecting information from references related to the study.

After data collection, the data were analyzed by identifying statements from *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* movie that indicate antihero characterizations of the main character, classifying antihero characterizations of the main character, determining the reasons why the statements show antihero characterizations, interpreting the context of situation in the movie, and

classifying statements that represent author's methods in presenting antihero characterizations, and describing author's characterization methods.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

These following data show that there are four antihero characterizations shown by Charlie Kelmeckis as the main character of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* movie. They are (a) Passive, (b) Dishonest, (c) Lonely, (d) Fragile. These four characterizations were mostly shown through V.O (Voice Only) or soliloquies of the main character. The use of this V.O. represents how the main character feels and thinks without reacting much towards the events which occur to him during the story.

1. Passive

In this movie, Charlie often shows his passivity especially when it relates to his feelings to his family and friends. Passive means accepting what happens or what people do without trying to change anything or oppose them. The statements below show that Charlie is passive in his class because he does not want to answer the questions in the quiz session.

Mr. Anderson: **“You should learn to participate. Why didn't You raise your hand? They call you teacher's pet? I used to get spaz. I mean, come on, spaz?”**
(Scene 11/Int. English Class; Page 78)

In describing Charlie's passive character, the author basically has given a clue that the movie is about the story of a wallflower through the movie title. Wallflower is a term used to describe a character or a person who does not have somebody to dance with at the party and now the meaning is expanded to describe a person who feels lonely or isolated because having no friends to talk to. Showing method is also used by the author in presenting Charlie's antihero character. It is shown by Charlie's soliloquies that occur more often during the movie because he tends to reveal his thoughts and feelings. Even so, there is also

some use of character's actions that portray Charlie's passive characterization even though it only appears a few. As shown by this following statement:

Mary Elizabeth: "We're literally making out, and I'm in my bra.
Hello! And the front door opens. It's my parents!
I'm scrambling to get my dress on. It was crazy.
Right, babe?"

(Charlie nods, tortured.)

(Scene 104/Int. Cafeteria – Lunch; Page 107)

In this scene, Charlie shows that he actually never agrees with the idea of dating Mary Elizabeth. Charlie does not speak any words and only portrays his disagreement by nodding idly as he has never been interested to share his love story with her. He just lets Mary do the talking and shows less response.

2. Dishonest

Besides being passive all the time, Charlie is dishonest too sometimes. However, he never intends to hurt people or to see them suffer by his dishonesty. That is mostly caused by Charlie's fear of losing his friends or his family's trust.

Sam : "Hey, Charlie."

Charlie : "**Hey, Sam. I didn't see you come in.** You want to work on probabilities and statistics?"

(Scene 58/Int. Kings Family Restaurant; Page 94)

In this scene, Charlie pretends not to see Sam entering the restaurant. He is too shy to reveal that he hopefully wants to spend the holiday with Sam even if it is only to study SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) together.

In presenting this antihero characterization, the author always uses showing method. In his soliloquy, Charlie just mentions that he does not want to tell the truth to his parents but he is not dare to tell them a lie. But when it relates to his friends, Charlie uses his statements to show his fake sympathy every time Craig cannot be with Sam. As shown in this following scene:

Charlie: "**I'm sorry Craig didn't come.**"

Sam : "Yeah. He said he didn't want to go to some stupid
High school dance. Can't say I blame him."

Charlie: "I don't know. If you like it, he should come."

(Scene 99/Int. Mill Grove High School – Gymnasium; Page 105)

3. Lonely

Lonely means unhappy because of not having friends or people to talk to. As the antihero, Charlie sometimes shows that there is a part of him who feels lonely.

Charlie (V.O.): At her going away party, I wanted her to know about that night we went through the tunnel. And how **for the first time, I felt like I belonged somewhere.**

(Scene 146/Int. Sam and Patrick's Kitchen/Living Room; Page 119)

In describing this characterization, the author uses showing method through the characters' statement and character's thoughts and feelings. Charlie never states that he feels lonely. He prefers saying it in implicit ways because he wants their friends to accept him as he is, not because they feel sorry about his problems.

4. Fragile

Besides being passive, dishonest, and lonely, Charlie is also described as a fragile person. Charlie portrays his fragility more often by his statements and thoughts or feelings. Fragile means weak and uncertain; easily destroyed or spoilt.

Charlie (V.O.): Sam is going to leave right after graduation. It all feels very exciting; I just wish it were happening to me. Especially because ever since I blacked out in the cafeteria, **it's been getting worse.** And **I can't turn it off this time.**

(Scene 138/Int. Charlie's Bedroom; Page 116)

To describe Charlie's fragility in the movie, the author mostly uses the main character's statements as shown in the hospital scenes. When he feels down, he always says that he should be blamed for his Aunt's death. If it relates to his friends, Charlie reveals his fragility through stream of consciousness as shown by V.O or his soliloquies; "I keep thinking about how school was going to be like without them", "...ever since I blacked out in the cafeteria, it's been getting worse. And I can't turn it off this time."

Discussion

Having analyzed the movie script of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, the researcher found statements that give implications to the portrait of antihero in the character of Charlie Kelmeckis. As related to Abrams theory (1999), it can be seen that Charlie is considered as an antihero because he has four dominant characterizations that basically belong to antihero; they are passive, dishonest, lonely, and fragile. Yet, he does not own other antihero characterizations suggested by Abrams that state that antihero is petty and ignominious too.

The analysis also shows that the author only uses one telling method through the movie title and four showing methods through characters' statement, characters' thoughts and feelings, characters' action, and stream of consciousness. But most antihero characterizations are shown through Charlie's thoughts and feeling by presenting more soliloquies. What Charlie feels and thinks about anything against him is only shown through this method. This is caused by his antihero characterizations that make him conceal the truth and cannot openly state his intention to anything he deserves.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

After analyzing the data, it is found that Charlie Kelmeckis owns four antihero characterizations; passive, dishonest, lonely, and fragile. The analysis also shows that passivity is Charlie's most dominant antihero characterization. In presenting the antihero in his movie, the author used both telling and showing method. The use of telling method is shown by the title of the movie. The term wallflower portrays that the movie is about the story of a passive and lonely person. To describe other antihero characterizations of Charlie, the author dominantly used showing method through characters' statements and characters' thoughts and feelings while the use of character's action and stream of consciousness only appears a few. Yet, during the movie, Charlie often used

soliloquies to express his feelings and thoughts as he is never open with what he feels to others.

Suggestions

In studying literature, character should be considered important as it can bring the readers to the theme of the story. It is also useful for the readers to know the characterization methods used by the author in order to deepen the understanding about characters. Especially in studying the character of an antihero, the readers should consider that antihero is not the antagonist and the antihero is not always described as the portrayal of a villain in the story.

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