



**THE STRENGTHS AND THE WEAKNESS POINTS OF
MITCH ALBOM'S *THE TIME KEEPER***

A FINAL PROJECT

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Submitted by:

Bobby Chandra Vinanti Widodo

A2B009002

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

DIPONEGORO UNIVERSITY

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer states truthfully that this final project is compiled by her without taking any results from other researches in S-1, S-2, and S-3 and in diploma degree of any universities. In addition, the writer ascertains that she does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned.

Semarang, Agustus 2014

Bobby Chandra Vinanti Widodo

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase.”

- Martin Luther King Jr

“Other things may change us, but we start and end with family.”

- Antony Brandt

“I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.”

- Philippians 4 : 13

*“The biggest lie that one can tell is ‘I do not have any time’.
The real answer should be ‘I do not use my time wisely enough to have time’”*

- Scathach, *The Magician*

*This final project is dedicated to
My beloved family and to everyone
who helped me accomplished this final project.*

“Thank you for supporting me.”

APPROVAL

Approved by,
Project Advisor,
August 2014

Dra. R. Aj. Atrinawati, M. Hum

NIP. 19610101 199001 2 001

VALIDATION

Approved by,

Strata 1 Final Project Examination Committee

Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University

On Wednesday, September 17 2014

Advisor,

Dra. R. Aj. Atrinawati, M. Hum

NIP. 19610101 199001 2 001

Reader 1,

Reader 2,

Dra. Lubna Sungkar, M. Hum

NIP. 19521108 198603 2 001

Dra. Arida Widyastuti, M. Hum

NIP. 19630607 198903 2 001

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Semarang, August 2014

The Writer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE.....	i
PRONOUNCEMENT.....	ii
MOTTO AND DEDICATION.....	iii
APPROVAL.....	iv
VALIDATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
ABSTRAK.....	ix
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Background of the Study.....	1
1.2. The Objectives of Book Review	2
1.3. Author’s Biography	2
CHAPTER II SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL	4
CHAPTER III REVIEW OF <i>THE TIME KEEPER</i>	6
3.1. The Strength of the Book	6
3.1.1. Theme	6
3.1.2. Style	8
3.2. The Weakness of the Book.....	10
3.2.1. Character	10
CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION.....	16
REFERENCES	
APPENDIX	
i. Author: Mitch Albom	
ii. Cover of the Novel: <i>The Time Keeper</i>	

ABSTRAK

Tugas akhir ini membahas tentang novel karya Mitch Albom yang berjudul *The Time Keeper*. *The Time Keeper* adalah sebuah novel yang bercerita tentang Dor, manusia pertama yang menghitung waktu di bumi. Ia dihukum di gua karena mencoba mengukur anugrah terbesar dari Tuhan, yaitu *Waktu*. Lalu kembali ke dunia, dengan membawa jam pasir ajaib dan sebuah misi yaitu menebus kesalahannya dengan mengajarkan makna *Waktu* pada dua manusia bumi. Dalam tugas akhir ini penulis memberikan ulasan mengenai kelebihan dan kelemahan novel tersebut. Kelebihan novel tersebut terletak pada tema dan gaya penulisan, sedangkan karakter merupakan kelemahan dari novel ini. Tujuannya agar pembaca memahami novel tersebut serta dapat mengetahui pendapat dari sisi penulis tentang isi novel. Penulis berharap semoga ulasan mengenai novel ini dapat bermanfaat bagi pembaca.

Kata kunci: *The Time Keeper*, *Waktu*, tema, gaya penulisan, karakter, kelebihan, kelemahan

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the world of literary, novel is known as one of the literary work. It is a fictional story in writing and has intrinsic and extrinsic elements. According to Perrine, a fantasy story, fiction, or novels are usually based on the experience of the author life (1966: 41). In a novel, the author makes every effort to show the reader the reality of life description through the stories contained in the novel.

A fiction is also suggested as an aspect to entertain the reader. Reading a fiction means we are enjoying the story inside and amusing ourselves. It does not matter how complicated our experience is, or how complicated a referring life is, “literature must always be interesting; it must always have a structure and an aesthetic purpose, a total coherence and effect” (Wellek & Warren, 1973: 212).

The Time Keeper is the newest Mitch Albom’s work of fiction. The writer will explain the strength and the weakness of this novel. The interesting theme and the author’s simple writing style which are easy to be understood might be the strengths point of this novel. This novel can urge the readers to find the depth in his simple, yet imaginative writings. Whereas the weakness point of this novel is in its character. Each character’s story seem very close to our daily life, so it is not difficult for us as

the reader to get into the characters story, but that kind of thing makes the story so usual and predictable.

1.2 The Objectives of Book Review

The objective of this book review is to explain the strong points that concern theme and style and also to explain the character as the weakness.

1.3 Author's Biography

Mitchell David Albom was born on May 23, 1958 in Passaic, New Jersey. He is an internationally renowned and best-selling author, journalist, screenwriter, playwright, radio and television broadcaster and musician. His books have collectively been sold over 33 million copies worldwide; have been published in forty-one territories and in forty-two languages around the world; and have been made into Emmy Award-winning and critically-acclaimed television movies. He is the middle of three children to Rhoda and Ira Albom. The family moved to the Buffalo, N.Y. area briefly before settling in Oaklyn, New Jersey, not far from Philadelphia.

After attending high schools in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, he left for college after his junior year. He earned a bachelor's degree in 1979 at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, majoring in sociology. In his early 20's, he eventually returned to graduate school, earning a Master's degree from Columbia

University's Graduate School of Journalism, followed by an MBA from Columbia University's Graduate School of Business.

Mitch Albom wrote seven other books, including the best seller, *Tuesdays With Morrie* (1997). His other works include *Live Albom I, II, III and IV*, "BO" (1989), and *Fab Five* (1992). His first novel, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, is the most successful US hardcover first adult novel ever. *For One More Day* debuted at No.1 on the *New York Times* Bestseller List and spent nine months on the list. *Have a Little Faith* was released in September 2009 and selected by Oprah.com as the best nonfiction book of 2009. *The Time Keeper* itself was published in September 2012. It is his most imaginative novel. *The Time Keeper* is about the first man on earth to count the hours, the man who became Father Time. This information is accessible in <http://mitchalbom.com/bio>

CHAPTER II

SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

Once upon a time when no one questioned about time, there lived a boy named Dor. He was so curious about the time. Dor married his childhood friend, Alli. There was a powerful king, Nim, who built a tower that could reach heavens. Later, this tower will be called Babel Tower. He asked the smart Dor to help him, but Dor refused, so Dor was banished from the city.

One day, Alli became really sick. At first Dor refused to leave her side. Soon she became worst. In a fit of frustration, Dor run back to the town climbed the tower to beg the gods for help, to stop the time, so he could help her wife. But as the result of his brazenness, he was banished to a cave where he must endure listening to humanity plead for "more hours, more years, more time, less time, slow time." He was punished for trying to measure God's greatest gift, time. After 6,000 years of torment, Dor was finally released back into the modern world with an enchanted hourglass and a mission to teach two wayward souls the true value of time, the importance of valuing life's moments.

Those two earth people were Victor Delamonte and Sarah Lemon. Victor was a wealthy man in his 80s. He was the unfortunate victim of a tumor and kidney failure. However, he was pronounced to die in a short time. He tried to achieve immortality by turning to cryonics, or the freezing of a person for later reanimation,

to save himself and his fortune. Sarah is a self-conscious teenage girl who wanted time to speed up. She loved a boy named Ethan, but he cancels on her multiple times and eventually humiliates her in front of all his friends. Sarah felt desperate with life and planned to commit suicide.

Like Dor, Victor and Sarah were both guilty of the sin of not being grateful for the time they have. By watching each of their lives, Dor tried to understand how he was supposed to help them. He touched the hourglass to control the time. Dor must discover a way to intervene in the lives of Sarah and Victor. Dor opened the hourglass and poured out the future. Dor then took Sarah and Victor inside the hourglass. Dor showed Ethan to Sarah in the immediate future, talked about Sarah's death as though it means nothing, then took Sarah to see his mother at the dealership handling over the car that Sarah lost her life in. Later, it is Victor's turn to look at the future. The future people used Victor's body as a spectacle. With the modern technology they could watch what was on Victor's mind, while his body was lying in a tube. Both began to regret their decisions when Dor finally felt the corrosion of six thousand years bear down on him as he told his ill-fated travels and detainment in the cave for tried to stop time, much to Sarah's astonishment and Victor's skepticism.

In a flash, Dor returned to his proper period where Alli was still alive and the Nim's tower looms over the heavens. Sarah and Victor were additionally returned to the modern era as they fight for their lives, which they both succeed. However, Victor died three months later, but not before granting enough money for Sarah to graduate at an Ivy League university.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF *THE TIME KEEPER*

The strengths and the weakness points of *The Time Keeper* novel are reviewed from the following points:

3.1 The Strengths of the Book

There are some strengths points from this novel which are going to be described. The strengths are:

3.1.1 Theme

Theme is one of the intrinsic elements in the prose. The writer will use this element to review the story of *The Time Keeper*. In fiction, the theme is not intended to teach or to preach. In fact, it is not presented directly at all. The readers extract it from the characters, actions, and settings that make up the story. In other words, the readers must figure out the theme themselves. The theme, as a piece of fiction, is a view about life and how people behave. Theme is one of the interesting points from this novel because theme is the central topic, subject, and concept of the novel. Besides that, the Novel-Writing-Help.com also described that:

“The theme of a novel is the deeper layer of meaning running beneath the story’s surface. While the surface story entertains the readers, the theme helps them to reach a new understanding of some aspect of the human condition”
(Novel-Writing-Help.com)

After reading this novel, it can be concluded that the theme of this novel is the appreciation of life. The story of this novel tells us about how time affects our lives from moment to moment. Many people feel there is not enough time for many reasons.

Dor as the main character, after finishing his task on Earth, is sent back to the day he has been confined. He is back to his wife, Alli. He believes that their togetherness is the most important thing in his life that cannot be replaced with anything. On other hand, he also realizes that it cannot last forever because death will separate them. So, the most important is he has to appreciate every time he has with his wife

*'I tried to stop your suffering,' he said
'We cannot stop what Heaven chooses.' She smiled weakly.
'Stay with me, forever' He touched her hair.*

...

'A wind blew, and the sand around his drawing scattered. He wrapped his fingers inside his wife's, and Father Time rekindled a connection he had only ever had with her. He surrendered to that sensation and felt that the final drops of their lives touch one another, like water in a cave, top meets bottom, Heaven meets Earth.' (Albom, 2012: 215)

Time is precious and people should spend it well. This work of fiction forces the reader to consider the meaning of *time* and why it is not good for humans to try to control it. It is not about the amount of *time* in life, it is about how the people appreciate *time* in their life and not waste the precious gift. It is all about family, respect them and enjoy their presence every day.

The idea of *time* is a relatively recent concept. The author does a superb job of bringing this idea into a thought-provoking, easily comprehended, enjoyable novel and takes only 224 pages. It can make the readers have some of a spiritual feeling and a faith in the future and an appreciation for moment and *time*. *The Time Keeper* is the story of moving on and acceptance but most of it, it is a story of how precious our *time* is. This book is a must-read for everyone, because it can help people realize what is the real meaning of time in lives and that time is always running. For everyone who does not have true concept of time or life's purpose, Mitch Albom can clearly describe what life is really like in this book.

3.1.2 Style

Style refers to the distinctive manner in which a writer arranges words to achieve particular effects. The arrangement includes individual word choices and matters such as the length of sentence, their structure and the use of irony (Meyer, 1990: 229).

There are many people who have gift in writing and Mitch Albom is one of them. *The Time Keeper* is easily read fable in one or two sittings (depending upon how long you sit). Albom uses simple sentences to tell a simple story. In this novel, the author mostly uses simple words and phrases in writing the novel, for example:

'A man sits alone in a cave.

His hair is long. His beard reaches his knees. He hold his chin in the cup of his hands. He closes his eyes. He is listening to something. Voices. Endless voices. They rise from a pool in the corner of the cave. They are the voices of people on Earth. They want one thing only. Time.' (Albom, 2012: 3)

'Sarah Lemon fears time is running out.

She steps from the shower and calculates. Twenty minutes to blow-dry her hair, half hour for make up, half hour to dress, fifteen minutes to get there.' (Albom, 2012: 9)

Even a slow reader could easily read this book in a couple of hours, which is good for a busy reader who wants to finish reading as soon as possible. Albom's style of writing is fluent, simple and with an emphasis on brevity. It explores time from various aspects: its creation, its use and how its value varies from person to person. The story is rather simple and straightforward. The readers do not have to expend too much energy about the ideas Mitch Albom is working with. There are a bit of sadness, a bit of thoughtfulness, and an ending that changes the common notions of *time* and how it is spent.

Its writing style is unique too. Each chapter is subdivided by a sentence or line of bolded words that emphasizes the specific theme. The short statements that ended every page, every chapter. For example:

'Sarah finds time in a drawer.

She opens it looking for her black jeans and instead discovers, buried near the back, her first watch—a purple Swatch model with plastic band. Her parents gave it to her for her twelfth birthday.' (Albom 2012: 14)

'He explained how once we began to chime the hour, we lost the ability to be satisfied.

There was always a quest for more minutes, more hours, faster progress to accomplish more in each day. The simple joy of living between sunrises was gone.' (Albom 2012: 207)

This particular style can accelerate the reading process, especially if the reader prefers not to read the whole paragraph at a time. His writing style is very unique and quote-able, which can make the reader quickly fly through the pages in one sitting as Albom's trademark quick style.

3.2 The Weakness of the Book

Apart from the strengths points, *The Time Keeper* also has the weakness point that will explain it as below:

3.2.1 Character

Character is the most important element in a story. However to understand a character is not easy, the reader must have a deeper understanding of the character.

According to Potter, characters are a basic element in much imaginative literature and therefore they meant the considerable attention paid to them. When critics speak of characters they mean any person who figures in a literary work not particularly a peculiar or an eccentric one. Sometimes a given character does not appear but it merely talked about (1967: 1).

Mitch Albom is good in writing but it seems to be lacking in character. The characters are a bit more shallow and the conflicts are not that deep. The story fails to shape them into unique and deeply human individuals. The people who can be a better example for one who has dealt with huge issues and struggled against depression is out there; the homeless, the poor people or the handicapped; the ones who are working for good and want to continue to live to reach succeed.

3.2.1.1 Dor

Dor's character is actually interesting, creative and fresh. The common image of Father of Time is an old man with long, flowing hair and beard, clutching an hourglass. This novel shows the imagined beginning of Father of Time, a rustic child who is running through the fields, which will become the first of the human race to count things and measure time.

‘Dor, as he runs, is counting his breaths.

He is the first person on Earth to attempt this –counting, making numbers. He began by matching one finger to another, giving each pairing a sound and value. Soon he was counting anything he could.’ (Albom, 2012: 7)

‘Dor?’

Well. Dor became a measurer of things. He marked stones, he notched sticks, he laid out twigs, pebbles, and anything he could count. He often fell into a dreamy state, thinking about numbers, and his older brother left him behind when they were hunting.’ (Albom, 2012: 11)

However, Dor’s punishment is too cruel for his “crime”. As a punishment for trying to gain human control over time, he is banished to a cave for centuries and forced to listen to the voices of all who come after him seeking more days, more years.

“Wait!” Dor yelled. “How long must I be imprisoned here? When will you return?”

The old man’s shrunken form reached the cave roof. It sliced a fissure in the rock. From that fissure fell a single drop of water.

“When Heaven meets Earth,” he said. (Albom 2012: 47)

'And thus, unknowingly, did Dor begin to serve his sentence—

To hear every plea from every soul who desired more of the thing he had first identified, the thing that moved man further from the simple light of existence and deeper into the darkness of his own obsessions.

Time.

It seemed to be running too fast for everyone but him' (Albom 2012: 57)

His story is all about how man is better off not counting the minutes in life.

'In the immeasurable centuries he spent inside the cave, Dor had tried every form of escape' (Albom 2012: 85)

3.2.1.2 Victor Delamonte

Victor's story seems a little far fetched. The wealthy businessman, who forgot the sweetness he had in youth and makes selfish choices, a man who believes he can control his destiny, even in death. Victor, however, will do anything to extend his life and buy himself more time on earth. He is even willing to stop dialysis if it means having his lifeless body frozen in a Cryonics lab to return generations later when there is a cure for his cancer and he can return to the life of wealth and luxury he has.

'He finally found his opening when a researcher from his West Coast offices, responding to his requests on "immortality," faxed a stack of material on cryonics. Cryonics. The preservation of humans for later reanimation. Freezing yourself.' (Albom, 2012: 60)

'The moment Victor declared dead, his body would be covered in ice. A pump would keep his blood moving so it wouldn't clot. Next, his bodily fluids would be replaced with cryoprotectant—a biological antifreeze—so that no ice could form inside his veins, a process called "vitrification." (Albom, 2012: 83)

'And being frozen for decades, maybe centuries, in exchange for coming out the other side, ready to resume his life—well that didn't seem a bad trade.' (Albom, 2012: 84)

His will to live does not depend on being with someone he loves but is driven purely by power and money. He is wrong while thinking that his money, his business, and his power are his meaning of life. In his last moment of life, he knows that happiness is everything and he only gets it with his wife, Grace.

'He had survived only three months beyond their night together in the emergency room. But his wife, Grace, said those were the most precious months of their marriage.' (Albom 2012: 221)

"Do you understand now?" he asked. "With endless time, nothing is special. With no loss or sacrifice, we cant appreciate what we have."Victor wanted an eternity. It had taken Dor all these centuries to comprehend the last thing the old man told him, the thing he shared with Victor now.

"There is a reason God limits our days."

"Why?"

"To make each one precious." (Albom 2012: 206)

3.2.1.3 Sarah Lemon

Sarah Lemon is a smart girl who is looking for attention and love that she never received since her parents divorced. She is so lonely and lack of confidence of herself. *'She ate lunch by herself, walked home by herself, and spent most evenings in the house with her mother.'* (Albom, 2012: 48)

'...Sarah , who could whiz through a biology exam, disliked what she saw in the mirror as much as she figured everyone else did: the hazel eyes, too far apart, the dry wavy hair, the gap between her teeth, the doughy flesh she had never really shed...' (Albom, 2012: 48)

For Sarah's story, the writer feels that her emotions and reactions are realistic, but there is nothing particularly new about an unhappy lonely teenager who feels awkward and unloved. She will do crazy thing like suicide in order to escape from her teen's problem. When she believes that she finds the boy that she loves, poor

Sarah is bullied, used and neglected by others. Sarah is incredibly gifted but desperate for love and attention, which eventually gets her into trouble with one of the most popular boys in high school. Sarah is an unattractive teenage girl who falls in love with the most popular boy at school, Ethan, but she finds out that Ethan does not love her back and laughs about her with his friends. She is so heartbroken that she tries to commit suicide. *'The verdict on Sarah Lemon was too smart, too fat, too weird—so few kids bothered to talk to her'* (Albom, 2012: 126).

'Ethan was, in her mind, the only boy she would ever love. But he did not love her back...Sarah finally blurted out how she felt about him, something she had been holding inside like an exploding star. But before she finished, before she said the last words of "I just really—I know it's crazy—I just love you, you know?" he began rolling his eyes as if he were looking for some friend to say "Can you believe this?"' (Albom, 2012: 143)

The author did a pretty good job of capturing how a teenage girl in this digital or social media age would think and act, but it might make Sarah's character here too cliché and predictable.

'Sarah wanted to explain it all, the humiliating of Ethan's rejection, the shameful feeling caused by his friends, the shock of seeing your secrets exposed though a computer screen, your future shattering to completely in front of you that dying with a lungful of poison seems like a relief... .."I was so lonely".
And Father Time said, "You were never alone." (Albom, 2012: 194)

The other thing that annoyed from this novel is how bleak the future is portrayed. In that part where Dor made Victor see the future that awaits him, they see the world is too crowded. The earth has become so different from now, too advanced and too convenient to live in but what they lack is a very fundamental element of

human existence, feelings. It is described that they may live longer than the present generation due to medical advances but they lack what is important. It implies too much of Albom's thoughts on how weak he believes humanity in the future. It can be true, but it can not be too. It is really not a thing that you can be sure of for now, but Albom's perspective is too pessimist.

'revealing massive high-rise buildings, packed thickly, block after block...there was almost no greenery and little color beyond steel blues and grays. The skies were dotted with unusual small aircraft, and the air itself had a different feel to it. It was thicker, dirtier, and cold as well.' (Albom 2012: 201)

*'They seemed young, often beautiful, but blank.
"Everyone in this time can live longer than we imagined," Dor explained.
"They fill every waking minute with action, but they are empty.'* (Albom 2012: 204)

This novel had a good message about time and a decent story, interesting concept, but it was a little too simplistic compared to the expectations we had. It seems like the kind of thing you might pick up at an airport and read on the ensuing flight for a shallow time-killer.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The story is not only inspiring, but also motivating and encouraging. The story is able to get its message across that *Time* is precious and the people should spend it well. *The Time Keeper* inspires the readers to take personal feeling and to appreciate the precious gift, before it is too late. The book is so creative and inspirational due to the author simple writing style. There are peacefulness and hopes that can be felt after reading it. It makes the reader have some of a spiritual feeling, a faith in the future, and an appreciation for moment and time.

The readers can get the lessons that it is impossible to beat time. After all, billionaires have the same 24 hours in a day that the homeless have. No one can live forever in this world. If the time comes, then it comes. Nothing is immortal in this world.

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APPENDIX

i. Author: Mitch Albom



ii. Cover of the Novel: The Time Keeper

