

## Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince Voldemort's Personality Change as Influenced by His Past Life and Psyche

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### ABSTRACT

This study discusses the personality change influenced by the past life in the antagonist character in J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince. The past experience has an effect in the antagonist character, Lord Voldemort. It is always interesting to discuss the effect of the past experience which can make a difference to someone's character. Every person has its own personality, but the effect of the past life can make a big impact to his/her personality.

This study is aimed to analyze what kind of past life which affects the personality of the character, Lord Voldemort. The psychological theory will be used to give explanation about personality and changes of personalities. Furthermore, psychological approach will be used in this study because personality is one of the aspects of a person's psychology.

Key words: personality, past life, psychological

### A. Introduction

In life, we find that people often are influenced by their past experience. There are many criminals who are often profiled as having a terrible childhood that unconsciously drives them to commit crime. Most of these unhappy events influence their personality to become more evil. Therefore, it is relevant to analyze the influence of past life on someone's personality change inside a novel. Inside it, there are many interesting parts that can pull out the readers' attention. One of the parts used to build a story in a novel is character. It is created to convey the author's ideas and views through its work and actions. A novel is a literary work in printed media that reflects real life. The reflection of the story may offer benefit towards the readers.

Furthermore, according to Eastman (1965, p. 23) in his *A Guide to the Novel*, novel is a fictional account of life that is told in prose to give emotional and intellectual pleasure to its readers. There is a plot inside it that can bring up a single and complete change in the life of its characters. J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* is one example of a novel that can give more pleasure, emotionally and intellectually, to the readers. It represents Rowling's ideas that are reflected through the characters.

This paper will discuss the personality change of Voldemort in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005). This is the sixth volume of the Harry Potter series. In this volume, more information about Voldemort's past life is revealed in detail if compared to

the previous ones. This paper would like to find out what past events that influence Voldemort's personality to change from an orphan named Tom Marvolo Riddle to a wicked-evil dark sorcerer. That is why the volume is chosen to discuss the personality change of Voldemort.

## B. Critical and Theoretical Approaches

### 1. Critical Approach

The approach being used in this study is the psychological approach. It is proposed by Rohrberger and Woods (1971, pp. 6-15) in their book *Reading and Writing about Literature*. This approach emphasizes on human psychology which includes human personality.

Furthermore, according to Rohrberger and Woods (1971, p. 13), the psychological approach involves the effort to locate and demonstrate certain recurrent pattern human psychology. This approach tries to find the human psychology such as human's personality in the literary work. It emphasizes on human psychology and believes that human's creativity, thought, behavior and other psychological aspects give a strong influence to the literary work.

### 2. Theories of Character and Characterization

Robert and Jacobs (1989, p. 47) in *Fiction: An Introduction to Reading and Writing* state that we must use our knowledge and experience as human being to make a judgment on the qualities of the characters being revealed. They also suggest character as not only being analyzed physically but also mentally or psychologically. They explain:

When you study character, be sure to consider physical description, but also be sure to relate the physical to the mental or psychological. Suppose your author stresses the neatness of one character and the sloppiness of another. Most likely, these descriptions can be related to your character study. The same also applies your examination of what a character does. Go beyond the actions themselves and try to determine what they show about the character. Always try to get from the outside to the inside, for it is on the inside that character resides (1989, p. 144).

Therefore, by examining the physical description of a character, we can draw an appreciation on the psychological state of the character. Go beyond what is appeared on the outside and try to find the personality of the character.

Inferring that dynamic characters always change, Perrine (1974, p. 70) in *Literature: Structure, Sound and Sense* claims that the dynamic characters' changing is influenced by three conditions. First, it must be within the possibilities of the character that makes it. Second, it must be sufficiently motivated by the circumstances in which the character finds himself. And the last one is that it must be allowed sufficient time for a change of its magnitude believably to take place. To sum up, a character may change if it is possible to make such change, it is supported by its environment, and it is given a sufficient period of time to make the change.

To make it easier to understand one's character in a novel, Murphy (1972, pp. 161-173) in his *Understanding Unseens*, presents nine ways to make the characters understandable. One of these is past life, which is through a person's past life; the author can give the reader a clue to the events that have to shape a person's character. This can be done by direct comment by the

author through the person's thought, through his conversation, or through the medium of another person.

### 3. Theories of Personality Change

Yuniarto and Anggraini's article *Voldemort's Transformation to Affect the Plot in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* uses Freud's theory on the unconscious which also shows that one's action may be influenced by a traumatic past events. They state,

According to Freud, the unconscious as that part of the mind beyond consciousness has a strong influence upon people's actions. He creates a theory called repression, where the forgetting or ignoring of unresolved conflict, unadmitted desires, or traumatic past events are forced out of unconscious awareness and into the realm of the unconscious (2006, p. 2).

There are many theories concerning personality. However, some of them can be combined to support one another. According to Pikunas (1976, pp. 271-272) in his book *Human Development: An Emergent Science*, "Personality is a dynamic system of traits, attitudes, and habit producing a varying degree of consistency in the total response repertoire of an individual." Mischel (1981, p. 2) says in *Introduction to Personality*, "Personality usually refers to the distinctive patterns of behavior (including thoughts and emotions) that characterize each individual's adaptation to the situations of his or her life." Adding the statement, he quotes Wiggins, "Personality is that branch of psychology which is concerned with providing a systematic account of the ways in which individuals differ from one another." Therefore, personality can be said to be interconnected with individual's unique traits, attitude, habits, and behavior (including thoughts and emotions) that are used to response a certain situation in his or her life.

Furthermore, Pikunas (1976, p. 271) states, "The personality patterns established during childhood are modified greatly during adolescence, when new developments and experiences complicate the adolescent's life." Based on this theory, it is clear that personality develops during someone's life. The events they have encountered will bring their own responsibilities, challenges, and crises.

Moreover, Hurlock (1974; p. 7) states in *Personality Development*, that personality can change. The development can be done in the individual's physical and psychological characteristics. And when the process of developing deals with patterning one's self concept, habits, attitudes, emotional states, and motives; it becomes more complex.

Each person's personality changes and develops into more stable as many experiences they have got. Mischel (1981, p. 4) states "personality psychologists study how people develop and change, as well as how they remain stable throughout the course of life." People usually develop in constructive ways to improve their life's quality. Therefore, a change can be said as turning into better or worse while develop tends to be turning into better. Additionally, Pikunas (1976, p. 271) mentions six factors and experiences appear in adolescence and alter the personality as follows:

1. Acquisition of adult physique;
2. Sexual maturation, accompanied by new drives and emotions;
3. Greater self-awareness, resulting in a heightened desire for self-direction and reevaluation of standards, goals, and ideals;
4. The need for companionship, with prime emphasis on heterosexual friendships;

5. Treatment by parents and peers;
6. Conflict arising from the adolescence's personality development.

To sum up, the theories above serve as the bases to analyze that personality may change. The change may be affected by the past experience of the character and its psychological condition.

### **C. Analysis**

#### **1. The Character of Voldemort**

Voldemort is once called Tom Marvolo Riddle. His Mother is a Witch named Merope Gaunt. Merope comes from a pure blood family. It means that she has to marry another wizard. However, she chooses to marry a muggle, human with no magical ability. The muggle, Tom Riddle (Voldemort's father), does not love Merope, but she gives him a love potion. After she is pregnant, she ceases to continue giving him the love potion, thinking that he does not need it anymore. She is wrong. Tom Riddle runs after realizing what has happened to him. Merope really feels the lost. Not so long after giving birth, she gives her son, young Tom Riddle, to a muggle woman and then she passed away.

The muggle woman takes good care of Riddle. However, she soon realizes that Riddle has a special ability. Because he lives in a non-magical society, there is no one there to explain it. Therefore, Riddle is considered as a strange boy. Riddle himself grows up thinking that he is a strange boy. At eleven, he is admitted to the Hogwarts, the School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. There, he lives with others who share the same ability. He is also one of the talented students there. He shows that he has an outstanding ability in every subject that is taught in the school. However, he is a solitaire. He does not want to have any friends, although there are many who want to befriend him. He shows that he does not want to depend upon others and that he only trusts in himself. It is also shown that he is brave and independent.

Young Riddle then finds out about his past. He realizes that he actually is the descendant of Salazar Slytherin, a once great wizard and one of the founders of Hogwarts. Slytherin was a wizard who hated muggles and half-blood wizards. He had a belief that half-bloods will destroy the pride of the pure-blood ones. Therefore, Young Tom Riddle hates the muggles very much. Moreover, the fact that his mother was left alone by a muggle makes the hatred even greater. It also makes him very embarrassed, because he is a half-blood himself.

This shame has led him to murder his father and leaves the blame to his uncle. This experience shows that he is also cunning and cruel.

As he grows older, Riddle becomes stronger. He is very skillful with magic and spells. He also becomes almost immortal because he can divide his soul. It makes him invincible. Furthermore, he is ashamed to use his father's name. He changes it into Lord Voldemort, a name that makes people afraid to mention. People are afraid of him because of his capability. He is seen as a great dark wizard. He likes to kill people, especially muggles. He also kills wizards and witches who do not want to join him. By killing and making people afraid of him, he wants to show that he has a great power. It can be seen that his motivation of killing is driven by his anger towards his past experience.

#### **2. The Personality Change of Voldemort**

According to Pikunas (1976, p. 271), there are some factors that may alter someone's personality. Some of these factors are the need for companionship, treatment by parents and peers, and conflict arising from the adolescence's personality development. Freud in Yuniarto and Aggraini (2006, p. 2) says that the unconscious has a strong influence upon one's action.

He further says that unresolved conflict, unadmitted desires, and traumatic past events can affect someone's life.

Voldemort has an unhappy childhood. As a child, Voldemort is lonely and he does not have any friends. He does not even have real parents. It is because her mother died when he was still a child. In the muggle world, his peers and adoptive parent consider him as a strange child because of his magical ability. Therefore, he feels ignored. He also has an unresolved conflict in his past. He cannot solve it because his mother has already died and out of anger he has killed his father. He is disappointed with his mother because she married a muggle. He also hates his father because he left his mother and especially because he cannot accept the fact that he is a son of a muggle. In Hogwarts, he also feels that nobody really cares for him. They only see him as a smart student and not giving him real love and attention. His disappointment towards his surroundings and the conflict with his family has unconsciously influenced his personality. As he grows older, he becomes easily angered towards people who ignored him. He also cannot forgive people who do him wrong. Instead of forgiving them, he tends to kill them. His personality becomes evil because of his tendency to kill people. Even a small mistake can lead to someone's death if they are dealing with Voldemort.

To cope with his disappointment and his feeling of being ignored, he decides to show his existence. He wants people to be scared of him. He does not want to be underestimated. Unfortunately, he does that by committing evil deeds such as killing people. It shows that he has developed an evil personality. This evil personality is the product of his trauma caused by the people surrounding him.

#### D. Conclusion

From the analysis, it can be concluded that Voldemort has a traumatic past life. This past events has a deep influence on the development of his evil personality. As it is stated by Freud and Pikunas, there are factors that cause Voldemort's personality change, namely, unhappy childhood and unresolved conflict. He has an unhappy childhood and an unresolved conflict that causes him to become easily angered with people who makes mistakes to him. His disappointment and the feeling of being ignored have shaped his personality into evil. He cannot forgive the people who do not follow him and he will easily kill them if they do so.

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