

CHARACTER IN CHILDREN REALISM OF JEFF KINNEY'S *DIARY OF WIMPY KID: THE UGLY TRUTH*

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Abstract

The objectives of this research are to prove the books of *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth* belong to children realism genre and the characters of Greg Hefley, Rowley Jefferson, and Dad suit in the realism novel. Thus, the researcher applies children literary theory, especially Lukens concept of genre and character.

This study is a qualitative research employing content analysis method. The main source of this research is a novel entitled *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth* s by Jeff Kinney which was published in 2012 by puffin books. The researcher was the primary instrument and the data sheets were the secondary instrument. The trustworthiness of the data was gained by providing rich, thick description; reading and re-reading the data; and conducting triangulation.

The findings of this research reveal that every literary element of the book has shown the characteristic of realistic text. The characters in this books are all have similarity with real life people. The plot are problems that commonly face by real people. The setting in this book are the same with the world we know it. Theme that is about coming of age. The researcher also found that the character of Greg Hefley, Rowley Jefferson, and Dad are suit with realism stories. They have character's features of credible, authentic, not stereotype, and multi-dimensional. In conclusion, the researcher finds out that Jeff Kinney's *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth* is realism novel which represent the reality of an ordinary middle school student. The idea of realism in portraying realities will help children as readers in understanding human problems and relationship.

Keywords: character , realism, children literature, *Diary of wimpy kid: the ugly truth*

INTRODUCTION

The existence of Children's Literature is often ruled out by society. In fact, children's literature can be one of the ways to introduce the literary world and become a means for children to be interested in exploring the realm of literature. Children's literature according to Davis (cited Sarumpaet, 2010) is a type of literature devoted to children with the direction of an adult member of a society. There are various characters, themes and formats in children's literature. Even books such as alphabet and numbers can be classified as children's

literature. In addition, there are also pictures books that contain the story of fantasy, history, biography, and reality. In essence, children's literature is everything that has the theme of children.

A work with effective language usage will produce an aesthetic experience for the child. Davis (in Sarumpaet, 2010) states that the experience of literature will be obtained by the child from the benefits of a literary work. Children's literature also provides extrinsic benefits such as: language development, cognitive, personality and social. In elementary school, literary learning

is intended to improve students' ability to appreciate literary works. Activities to appreciate literature relate to exercises to sharpen feelings, reasoning, imagination, and sensitivity to society, culture and the environment. The development of literary abilities in elementary schools is conducted in various types and forms through listening, speaking, reading and writing (Davis in Sarumpaet, 2010).

There are some ironies in Indonesia about children literature. Indonesia have librarian institutes, and departments of library science, but it is almost impossible to find librarians for children. Murti states, "We have librarians, a university for librarians and a department of library science, but how many librarians are interested in specializing as a children's librarian? None. I haven't met a children's librarian here in Indonesia," (2013). The irony continues with people who care about Indonesia's children literature are come from outside of Indonesia. When Indonesian children are dying for literature, adult people seem do not care with children. While People who do not have any relations and responsibility came into this country help them a without reward. .

Based on the issues above, the research should be conducted on children literature, especially in Indonesia, should be more active. The goal is to pay more attention to children's literature and to give the awareness of the importance of children's literature. That's why researcher have an

interest in researching children's literature.

Researcher has a special interest in the literary genre of children's realism. Realism in Children's literature is understood that the stories told may exist and occur, but does not have to exist and occur. In this genre, the events told in reasonable and logical, with a variety of events, actions and interactions as if it did occur. In addition to the content and the way the story plausible, way to resolve it was also reasonable and trustworthy (Lukens, 1999).

By writing *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth*, Jeff Kinney tries to convey children's real life through his works. Most children text is so easy to predict because children texts usually contain people that are too black or too white that are not exist in reality (Lukens, 1999). Kinney offer a new kind of children text, a realistic text which contain the truth. Kinney's novel is very different from conventional children texts, his novel contain non perfect character with all its flaws. Character on the story of *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth* are pure reflection of real life people. It is obvious that Jeff Kinney make those characters for entertainment which drag the reader to laugh.

In Kinney's novel, each characterization of the characters represents a character in real life. Therefore, the researcher establish a step to examine more deeply how the classification of characters as realistic character in the novel using the theory of children literature. The researcher

focused on Lukens' theory on the grounds that this theory is a very suitable theory to be the basis of research.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research methodology is commonly defined as the way of thinking and doing which are prepared to complete and get the purpose of the research. According to Creswell (2009:4) a quantitative research uses variables and measurements to process the data. The result of this research is presented in numerical forms. Since the data is not numeric, the analysis will be explained in the form of words and sentences; this study uses a descriptive qualitative research. Creswell (2007:37) states that qualitative research is a research which is begun with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The multiple data sources of this research are words or images (Creswell, 2007:38). The result of the analyzing process was also presented in the form of words, clauses and sentences instead of numerical data.

Since the research was a qualitative research, the researcher became the main instrument to this study. The researcher involved entirely in this study. According to Moleong (2001: 201) the researcher was the instrument in a qualitative research. Thus, in this study, the researcher himself used his

capacity to design the research topic, to collect the data research, to analyze the collected data, to interpret the data, and to report the result of this study. In order to produce a better result of the study, the researcher used his interpretation to create understanding on the object of the study.

The main source of this research was a novel written by American author Jeff Kinney written in 2010 which entitled *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth*. The novel consists of 217 pages. The researcher used the 029 edition which published by Puffin Books on 2012. This novel provides main data used by researcher.

The main theory used in the research were taken from *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature* as secondary source written by Rebecca J. Lukens published by Addison-Wesley Educational Publisher Inc. university press in United States. The additional sources was taken from several books, journal, essay, and articles in a form of printed and electrical one. Those resources were taken to enrich the researcher's knowledge and comprehension in conducting this study.

The data of the research were then categorized into two thematic discussions in accordance to realism texts and realistic characters on children realism. The researcher marked some bold sentences which support and emphasize the categories she made to ease the analyzing process. Later the data were presented in the data sheet. This

particular data sheet was used to see the progress of the research. The data sheet provides some features, such as Number, Page, Data, explanation, category, and Code.

To increase the credibility of the research findings, the researcher also conducted multiple and data sources triangulation by gathering evidence taken from a variety of data sources such as books, theses, journals and websites which were related to the research matter. Each type of source of data strengthened the evidence and gave different insights regarding the phenomena under study.

In essence, trustworthiness can be thought of as the ways in which qualitative research ensure that transferability, dependability, confirmability and credibility are evident in their research.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussions are divided into two parts, which are based on the objectives of the research in chapter 1. The first part focuses on the literary element which indicates this novel into the category of realism. The second part focuses on identifying characteristics of realism characters reflected on Greg Hefley, Rowley Jefferson, and Dad.

Character in realistic fiction has specific characteristics which represent real life people. The format of book *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth* is a diary form, thus this book use first person point of view

in which the main character is telling the story. The characters in the story are all described by the main character of Greg Hefley

Characters in realism present as real as picture of human being with its complexity. In the story of *Diary of Wimpy Kid*, all character are human being, there is no supernatural being. Similar to the characteristic of human being, the characters in *Diary of Wimpy Kid* have earthly flaws.

Tyson is nice enough, and we like the same video games. But **he pulls his pants all the way down when he uses the urinal**, and I don't know if I...(Kinney, 2010: 3)



Figure. 1

Greg describes his friend Tyson has a strange habit on every time he went to toilet, Tyson always unnecessarily pull his pants all down. On Greg's view, Tyson's strange habit is also considered disgusting, as every time he sees Tyson's butt while he is taking a pee on the urinal (picture .4). Tyson's strange habit is what make Greg ruled him out as a best-friend material. Tyson's habit possibly happens to any children in real life.

In realism, plot plays importance role in establishing the story of a novel. Plot in realism must be faithful with all the elements of plot that lead the story to be believable. The conflict present in the books of *Diary of*

Wimpy Kid The Ugly Truth is ordinary conflict which is very similar to the reality.

It's been almost two and a half weeks since me and my ex-best friend, Rowley Jefferson, had our big fight. To be honest with you, I thought he would've come crawling back to me by now, but for some reason, that hasn't happened...(Kinney, 2010: 1).

From the quotation above, Kinney opens the story with a clear background of problem of the main character. The problem that the main character faced is a common problem faced by children in real life, having conflict with his best-friend with no reason.

Mostly children's unintentional meeting is a starting moment to solve conflict between friends, this kind of thing commonly happens in the reality. After the meeting, most children will get along without strong solution toward the problem they have before. Kinney also present this in his books.

Speaking of things getting back to normal, **I decided it was time for me and Rowley to put the past couple of months behind us and get our friendship back on track...**(Kinney, 2010: 215)

Without any strong action or strong argument, Greg and Rowley end their fighting. In reality, children also experience the same thing in how they are getting back together with his/her friend after a fight. When they meet each other, they do not talk about the fight before, then they just get along instantly after the meeting likes nothing ever happens.

The setting in *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth* is presented in detail both on setting of place and setting of time. The background; place and time are the same as in real life as the world we know it. Jeff Kinney manages to describe the detail of setting on his novel. These are the examples: Kinney provides detail of setting in form of words. He writes the detail both on the setting of time and setting of place.

When George started chasing people around, I excused myself to go to **the bathroom** so I could brush my teeth. **The bathroom is in the back of the auditorium, and the lights were off, so it was really dark back there...**(Kinney, 2010: 156)

The setting of place is presented in details and contains realistic features, thus the readers are able to imagine the situation and becomes comparison with reality.

In realism, the theme is realistic and plausible, it can be anything dealing with people, life, nature and the world that need to be understood by readers. The major themes in *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth* are the coming of age and friendship. Those kind of theme are suitable with characteristics of realism, as it reflects the people's experiences in general.

The coming of age stories tells about the development of a child or adolescent into adulthood. Kinney presents the common problems experienced by children in real life about the proses of growing up. Thing that comes up with his coming of age is that he must giving up his favorite dentist because

his Dad think he was too old for children dentist.

But Dad said I'm "too old" to keep going to a kids' dentist, so starting today he was switching me over to his dentist, Dr. Kagan...(Kinney, 2010: 92)

Greg is forced by his Dad to switch his dental care. His father switches him over without the any discussion with Greg. It is hard for Greg to let go his old dentist, especially when he is in loved with his hygienist Rachel.

Based on Johnson's book *The Joy of Children's Literature*, criteria for characters in children realism are credible, authentic, not stereotypic, and multi-dimensional (2008: 174-175). In this research, the researcher find three characters that suit the most with the characteristic of realism's characters, they are Greg Hefley, Rowley and Dad.

Character in realism must be credible it means that the characters have no super power and possess the quality of human being which is behave, thinks, act, and talk like regular people. The credibility of the characters in realism must be understandable so it can be accepted by common people's logic. They consistently represent within their age group and cultural background.

Greg Hefley is the main character in the story of *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth*. As the main character of realism text, he shows many aspects representing the aspect of realism's credible character. Greg presents the credibility of the character

through his feeling in the time of crisis with his best friend.

Now that our friendship is history, I'm in the market for a new best friend. The problem is, I invested all my time in Rowley, and I don't have anyone lined up to take his place...(Kinney, 2010: 2)

From the quotation above, Greg experiences confusion over his crisis. His feeling is understandable, it is the reflection of children feeling when they have a fight with his best friend. In one side, Greg wants to forget the past, in the other side he realizes that the fact all time he was only been with one person, Rowley.

The characters in realism have to makes the reader recognize that all the traits they possess are realistic. The responses given by the character in realism must be the same with real people's responses in real life. Character must reflect honesty of real people that do not exaggerate or diminish. The character's reaction toward problem must show genuineness.

Dad is a character that describe had good characteristic such caring. Almost every parent in real life care about their children. A father has responsibility to raise their children and teaching his children for better future. In the story of *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth*, the first lesson he teach to his children was by teaching Greg on how to wake up in the morning all by himself

Dad said that if I don't learn to wake myself up with an alarm clock, then I'm not gonna know

how to do it when I go off to college
...(Kinney, 2010: 65)

From the quotation above reader can draw an illustration of caring father by reminding his child to start a good habit of waking up in the morning by himself. Dad is concern about his children future. He also give believable consequence if Greg do not start to learn waking up in the morning by himself. Almost all father in real life do the same thing, teaching his children about responsibility and independence.

In realism story, stereotyping must be avoid the make the story more lifelike. The qualities of characters are unexpected as it provide the story more exciting and surprising. Jeff Kinney as the author, makes the story with non-stereotype characters, somehow the story is still understandable. Non- stereotype character means that the characters have more than one particular type of characteristic.

The main character usually have the characteristic such honest, brave, smart, powerful, etc. the reason why the main character fill up with good features is because in children story the idea of teaching and preaching are widely popular. Greg has defied the stereotype of the main character in children story. Unlike the main character in children stories who usually honest, Greg was the other way around.

I knew my chances of getting the part weren't good when the casting people sent me out the door without even asking my name. My opportunity was

slipping away, so **I did what I could to improve my odds "im pretty sure the next kid in line is Allergic to peaches"**...(Kinney, 2010: 29-30)

He was participate in the casting of Peachy Breeze Ice Cream commercial. As he realize that his chance of getting the part was slipping away, he eventually sabotage the casting people by telling them that the next contestant is allergic to peaches.

One-dimensional character in good realism must be avoid to present the characteristic of real life people. As in the real life, there is no person with only one-dimensional characteristic.

Greg Hefley is character describe as the main character who lacks of conventional heroic qualities and attributes. Greg shows real life characteristic of human being, Kinney present this character as a caring friend for Rowley

Rowley doesn't even know how to tie his shoes yet, because he's the kind of person who has Velcro everything. Last year Rowley's mom bought him sneakers with laces, and I can't **even tell you how many times I had to bail him out**...(Kinney, 2010: 21-22)

From the quotation above, Greg always helping his friend Rowley tied his shoes. He also has bad characteristic of a dishonest children. The most obvious one is when he lie to his own mom.

I really don't like this permission slip thing. Mom only lets me watch G-rated movies, so I know there's no way she' ll let me be in the class. **To get around that problem, I typed up**

a fake note and taped it on top of the actual permission slip...(Kinney, 2010: 84)

He know that he will not get his permission slip sign if he tell his mom about boys-girls slumber party. He eventually lies to his mother by typing a fake note to get his mother's signature.

Greg's complex characteristic of goodness and badness reflect real life people's personality as there no person in real life who is solid in goodness or solid on badness.

Rowley Jefferson had several characteristic which make him multidimensional character. Rowley is describe as childlike person. In the beginning of the story. Rowley is immature person who cannot stand in health class. The health class teaching about growing up stuff. Rowley is so childish that he pass out from because of a sensical word.

Rowley didn't even make it through the whole video. **He passed out at the two-minute mark when they said the word "perspiration."** To be honest with you, I don't know if Rowley's ready for this stuff. **He's basically like a little kid.** He told me once that he avoids the older kids at school because he's afraid he's gonna "catch puberty..."(Kinney, 2010:18-19)

Greg clearly describe that Rowley is like a little kid. His reaction over the word "perspiration" is described how immature Rowley is. Rowley also think that puberty is contagious.

Although Rowley is childlike, but after all Rowley is still a good friend for Greg. Rowley's childish characteristic might bring shame to Greg, but there in no one better to be friend with except Rowley. In real life there is no such thing as perfect friend, people always come in one package deal with all their advantages and flaws.

So after school today I went up to Rowley's house to see if he wanted to hang out. **He was so happy to see me** that it was kind of embarrassing. **Rowley asked me if we'd be "best friends forever," and he gave me half of this matching locket** he's always tried to get me to wear...(Kinney, 2010: 216)

His flaw of being childlike somehow cover with his characteristic of being good friend. He also propose Greg to be his best friend by offering him matching locket.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing Kinney's *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth* based on theory of structuralism and children literature. It can be concluded that.

1. Realism proposed the idea of reality through fictional aspect. It represent life in a literary work as the world we living. The researcher fine that the book of *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth* is categories as realistic text. Every literary element of the book has shown the characteristic which possesses by realistic text. The characters in this books are all have similarity with real life people. The plot in this books is contain with

problems that commonly happens in real life. The characteristic of setting in this book are the same with the world we know it. Theme that is presented by this book is about coming of age, the author present the consequences dealing by the characters when they about to hit puberty.

2. There are three characters which has been analyzed by writer, they are Greg, Rowley, and Dad. There are four aspect which indicate the character of realism credible, authentic, non-stereotype, and multi-dimensional. Each character possesses all those realistic characters. The portion of each character are different, Greg as represent ordinary middle school student, Rowley represent the child like person, and dad is the representation of fathers in real life.

In conclusion, greg, rowley, and dad has represent realistic character of realism story. The book *Diary of Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth* by Jeff Kinney can be categories as realism as the elements of characters, plot, setting, and theme successfully shows the characteristic of realism text.

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