

Struggle of Perfections in John Green's novel

The Fault in Our Stars

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Abstract

This study is under the field of psychological studies. Specifically, it is a psychological study which explores the relationship between life perfection of a girl as a socialized entity. The aim of this study is to analyze the psychological developments called life perfection performed by Hazel Grace Lancaster, the main character in *The Fault in Our Stars*. This study has two objectives, they are to identify the life perfection and find out how the character's struggle to reach it.

This study is a qualitative research employing content analysis method. The main source of this research is a novel entitled *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green which was published in 2012 by Dutton Books. The data were some expressions used to show the kinds of life perfections and character's struggle in the novel. The researcher was the primary instrument and the data sheets were the secondary instrument. Data analysis was conducted through four steps: organizing and preparing the data, reading and re-reading the data, sorting the data, interrelating the description, and interpreting the meaning of description. The trustworthiness of the data was gained by providing rich, thick description; reading and re-reading the data; and conducting triangulation.

This study revealed 2 findings. First, there were four kinds of life perfections found in this research. They are: knowing the ending of *An Imperial Affliction*, making Hazel's parents happy, minimizing casualties of Hazel's death and to be closer with Augustus Waters. Second, there were four categories of struggle related in gaining the life perfection. They are Hazel's striving in knowing the ending of *An Imperial Affliction*, Hazel's struggles in making her parents happy, Hazel's attempts in minimizing the casualties of her death and Hazel's efforts in order to be closer with Augustus.

Keywords: psychological, perfections, goals, struggles, *The Fault in Our Stars*

BACKGROUND

Perfection is one of the important factors in someone's life, means everyone deserves perfection in their life even though they have to struggle and do everything as a form of sacrifice. Most of the people search for it without knowing what it looks like. Some of them know the perfection they dream of but they do not know how to get it. They pursue their own perfection to reach the maximum happiness of life. As perfection of life is a complex feeling inside human minds, it cannot be measured or bought by anything. From this definition, the idea of perfection is complicated as it requires a hard work and sacrifices to gain. Commonly, people attempt to gain this need in different ways, as they dream about it in a different meaning.

Based on human nature, they want to fulfill their needs, to the maximum possibility of perfection. Unfortunately, fulfilling a need is not easy because the nature of human need is unlimited. To be successful in fulfilling the unlimited needs, someone must have a high understanding of efforts in developing their way to get their perfection. Perfection is a state of mind that is constructed by personality developments.

In *The Fault in Our Stars* novel written by John Green, a novel which contain several issues about the struggle in seeking life perfection which describes the personal life of a girl named Hazel Grace Lancaster. Considering that there are several aspects to analyze, this research focuses to two problems. They are

identifying the kinds of life perfection that gives meaning to Hazel, and

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research. Creswell (2007:37) explains qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning of individuals or groups assign to a human or social problem. The result of the analyzing process is also presented in the form of words, clauses, and sentences as a replacement of numerical data.

Data source used in this research was taken from a novel entitled *The Fault in Our Stars*. The data are the expressions, symbols, words, phrases, clauses and sentences

analyzing the struggle of Hazel in getting her life perfection.

taken from the novel. The data were related to the kinds of life perfection that gives meaning to Hazel as the main character in the novel and analyzes the struggle of Hazel in getting her life perfection.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

A. Kinds of life perfection that gives meaning for Hazel.

1. Knowing the ending of *An Imperial Affliction*

In *The Fault in Our Stars* novel, Hazel is the major character that represents the life of a teen girl who lives with thyroid cancer in her body. Every human has their own goal, so was Hazel. She is an ordinary girl who has her own goal in life.

Unfortunately, her physical condition makes her life goal seems unreachable for her. In the story, Hazel mentioned her several fictional goals which reflect her wish in a different timeline.

The first is implied by these lines:

“...and then there are books like *An Imperial Affliction*, which **you can’t tell people about, books so special and rare and yours** that advertising your affection feels like a betrayal.

(Green, 2012:2)

...seemed to understand me in weird and impossible ways. **An Imperial Affliction was my book, in the way my body was my body and my thoughts were my thoughts.**”

(Green, 2012:2)

This quote describes her favorite novel entitled *An Imperial Affliction*. It is a novel about a girl named Anna who has cancer, and it's the only book she's read of living with cancer ties

with her experience. Hazel's bound to the novel offers a sort of companionship, which comforts her. The novel represents Hazel's experience the battles for her illness and she obsesses over the fates of the character in the novel because they function as her representations for her own parents.

2. Making her parents happy

In the beginning of *The Fault in Our Stars* novel, Hazel mentions her feelings about being a depressed girl:

Late in the winter of my seventeenth year, **my mother decided I was depressed, presumably because I rarely left the house, spent quite a lot of time in bed, read the same book over and over, ate infrequently, and devoted quite a bit of my abundant free time to thinking about death.** I hadn't been in proper school in three years. My parents were my two best friends. My third best friend

was an author who did not know I existed.

(Green, 2012:1)

This line shows Hazel state of feelings in the beginning of the novel. As a girl who suffers from cancer, she becomes more vulnerable to this kind of feeling. She knows that her mom thinks that she was depressed, as she often thinking about death. As a teenager, that means so much to her and she realizes where she is, no friends, no boyfriends and dying all time. Her life will be completely empty if she did not have her parents.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that Hazel is suffered from inferiority feeling. Hall and Lindzey (1985: 147) state that inferiority means feeling weak and unskilled in completing the tasks that need to be accomplished. It is an

expression of an individual perception due to a condition, which is caused by inability or imperfection feeling. The inferiority feeling often leads people in destructing themselves, as they believe that they are relying on something which is not good enough for them.

3. Minimizing casualties of her death

Hazel sees herself as an outsider, who slightly alienated from the world. She has a mixed up feeling towards herself. In the first, she doesn't want to be close with anyone because she will leave a scar, a mark that hurts everyone as she compares herself as a grenade which can explode anytime and wound everyone nearby.

I wanted to know that he would be okay if I died. I wanted to not be a grenade, to

not be a malevolent force in the lives of people I loved.

(Green, 2012:11)

In this line, Hazel explains how she worried about Augustus when she dies. She's afraid that Augustus will be shattered if she dies beside him. This situation also occurred with her parents. Hazel loves her parents, whatever she agrees with them or not. She knows that she needs them, but she doesn't want to hurt them.

4. To be closer with Augustus Waters

Hazel opinions about Augustus are hyped; she describes that her feelings about him are so remarkable. It is obvious that is the first time she met a person who knows her well enough and did not feel pity for her condition. She describes Augustus as

the best guy she ever met, and she compares her position with him are very different.

“My name is Hazel. Augustus Waters was the great star-crossed love of my life. Ours was an epic love story, and I won't be able to get more than a sentence into it without disappearing into a puddle of tears. Gus knew. Gus knows. I will not tell you our love story, because—like all real love stories—it will die with us, as it should”

(Green, 2012:20)

This line of eulogy shows her that she to be with Augustus whatever they would be. She realizes that their time is closer to the end and she wants him to know that she would be with him, whatever happens after. She added that her experience with him is like forever and she's thankful for the chance he has given to her.

B. Hazel's struggle in getting her life perfection.

1. Hazel's striving in knowing the ending of *An Imperial Affliction*

Hazel's striving for knowing the ending of her favorite novel *An Imperial Affliction* is driven by her curiosity and ambition. Her ambition encourages her to struggle with any condition she's facing in. When her health deteriorates, she said:

“Can't I just get like a lung transplant or something?” I asked. Dr. Maria's lips shrank into her mouth. “You would not be considered a strong candidate for a transplant, unfortunately,” she said.

(Green, 2012:8)

Dr. Maria's answers hurt her a little, although she realizes it is no use wasting good lungs for her hopeless

case. She continues to strive for her wish, when she asks her mother;

“Can we call Dr. Maria and ask if international travel would kill me?”

(Green, 2012:7)

This line implies that her ambition to go to Amsterdam for meeting her favorite author although the travel itself may threaten her life. She is ready to gamble her life with the travel plan as it is her last attempt to find the author and she did not want to waste Augustus's last wish to fulfill her own wish.

2. Hazel's struggles in making her parents happy

In *The Fault in Our Stars*, Hazel is described as a girl who has a thyroid cancer. Her health is in a bad condition

which, which forces her to carry an oxygen tank every time.

“No, it's fine,” I said. **The cylindrical green tank only weighed a few pounds, and I had this little steel cart to wheel it around behind me.** It delivered two liters of oxygen to me each minute through a cannula, a transparent tube that split just beneath my neck, wrapped behind my ears, and then reunited in my nostrils. **The contraption was necessary because my lungs sucked at being lungs.**

(Green, 2012:1)

The cause why she carries an oxygen tank is because her lungs cannot function as normal people. She said that her lungs suck being lungs, as sometimes it fulfilled with water and she cannot breathe because of it. She needs the oxygen tank to help her breathe, and she cannot breathe normally without it. Although she can breathe without it, but it feels better when she use it. Her health condition

is making her feel dizzy, and she cannot stand too long without sitting or leaning on some objects. She realizes that her physical needs are vary than the others.

3. Hazel's attempts in minimizing the casualties of her death

Hazel lives with the only daughter of her small family who loves her so much. In their economic position, her parents barely handle the cost of her medication, although they can work it out. With full support from her parents, she feels safe to live her life. She doesn't let her parents know her feelings about her illness, although her parents knew about it. As she stated in the beginning of the story when she tries to avoid being too close with her parents;

“I want to minimize the number of deaths I am responsible for,” I said.

(Green, 2012:2)

She tries to avoid her parents as she believes that she’s will leave a scar in her parent’s life. She did not want to hurt other people and she tries to minimize the casualties of her death in the future. She frequently compares herself as a grenade, which will blow up and hurt people around her.

4. Hazel’s efforts in order to be closer with Augustus

Hazel realizes that she cannot deny her feelings to Augustus. It is a matter of choice, to be close to him or leave him as she should be. She is thinking about leaving him, but she cannot. This might be a problem for her, but every living creature must face

their problems as problems is the part of life.

I sped up Ditch Road past flashing yellow lights, going too fast partly to reach him and partly in the hopes a cop would pull me over and give me an excuse to tell someone that my dying boyfriend was stuck outside of a gas station with a malfunctioning G-tube. But no cop showed up to make my decision for me.

(Green, 2012:18)

When Augustus got stuck in a gas station, Hazel tries to help him as fast as possible. She did not mind the risk of speeding and may be pulled over by a cop. She cannot deny that she is worried about him and she is afraid of what happens if she is late. After Augustus died, she realizes that no one’s been responsible for her loss and she must live her life until the day ends.

CONCLUSION

This research identifies 4 kinds of life perfection giving meaning to Hazel found in the novel.

1. Knowing the ending of An Imperial Affliction
2. Making her parents happy
3. Minimizing casualties of her death
4. Being closer with Augustus Waters

Hazel's struggles in getting her life perfection are distributed into four categories; going to Amsterdam to meet her favorite author, doing medication and stay healthy, trying to avoid many casualties if she dies, and taking care of Augustus. Those kinds of Hazel's struggles in getting her life perfection is a proof that she can gain her own perfection although she may

appear fragile and incapable of doing so. Her struggles is a proof of her dedication in fulfilling her life perfection.

Hazel's choice of life perfection shows her personal development from the beginning to the end of the story. She is transformed from a self-centered girl to a moral one, who tries to live her life as it meant to be. Her experiences taught her to keep progressing whatever problems she may face.

In short, Hazel's struggle represents consistency and determination above her physical limitation. She finally resolves her problems by showing her struggles and abilities in gaining her life perfections. In the end of the story, she finally turns out to be a self-actualized girl who

lacks prejudice and accepts the facts of what have she is been into.

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