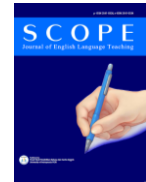




SCOPE

Journal of English Language Teaching

| p-ISSN 2541-0326 | e-ISSN 2541-0334 |
<https://journal.lppmunindra.ac.id/index.php/SCOPE/>



Article

Characters And Moral Values in “The Lorax” by Chris Renaud

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KEYWORDS

Character;
 Moral Value;
 The Lorax Movie.

A B S T R A C T

The objective of this research is to analyze the character and moral value in “The Lorax” by Chris Renaud. The method employed a descriptive-analysis. Movie script and scenes were the data with tables for characters and moral values to be analyzed as the instruments. The data were analyzed by using Schmidt’s theory for characters and Gulla’s theory for moral values. The research results find out the five types of characters. The protagonist has the most fractions with 26%. Sidekick has the second-highest level at 20%. Another sidekick represents the same 20 % of the total. The antagonist’s share of showing in this story is 16 %. The following percentage is 10 % for the mentor and the smallest group in terms of character is a love interest at 8%. The research also results in 11 moral values in this movie. They are kindness 18,7%, commitment 17,6%, love 14,7%, honesty 12,7%, respect for others 9,8%, integrity 4,9%, sacrifice 4,9%, compassionate 4,9%, truthfulness 4,9%, tolerance 3,9% and sincerity 3%. Ted Wiggins as the protagonist and the moral value of kindness have the most portion in this movie.

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INTRODUCTION

Since a long time ago, humans have expressed feelings, ideas, and thoughts into a beautiful play of words through a medium of literature. According to Goodman (2001), literature comprises experimental writing by using some styles and techniques of writing a form of language to express and to create innovative images or ideas using imagination on purpose to connect to readers’ thoughts and perspectives. Likewise, Royle and Bennett (2004:35) state that literature is the kind of written art to reveal the incredible standpoints, feelings, and opinions of an author continuously and inspirationally. If people who possess something called artistic value to try to attempt within the writing form can be successful and fail if they do not. That is the reason why literature as the writing ideas by an author has been regarded as an aesthetic art. Thus,

“Literary works retain advantages for human’s life because they can entertain, increase wisdom and deepen the readers’ insight” (Ahmed, 2017:131-132).

There are two kinds of literary works; informative literature (non-fiction) and imaginative literature (fiction) (Yulfani and Rohmah, 2021). Prose writing based on truth is called nonfiction. “Reality, actuality, history, and description are incorporated in informative literature. Imagination is fundamental for fiction” (Chucks, 2018:2). In the same way, Mazzeo (2012:7) defines fiction as the “author’s imagination in a written work and nonfiction as truth or facts”. In addition, literature may be classified according to the genre as well. The main genre of literary work is divided into three kinds, namely poetry, novel, and drama or movie (Cuddon, et. al., 2013). Similarly,

Bonn (2010:93) states that “Literature incorporates poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction writing, oral, dramatic, broadcast compositions, television shows, and films”. Literature is not only in the form of written works but also broadcast by electronic methods via cable, air, and the internet for radio and television. They disperse pictures, static and moving, visual text and sounds.

Different from poetry and novels that consist of written text, movies are more complete mass media. The ability of film to be transformed with an ease has been an advanced technology for entertainment, documentation, instruction, and transformation of the broad public (Bonah, 2018). It applies moving pictures and sounds to tell a story. It is also called a motion picture. With its potential visuality, the film can give connection to the emotional center and can be a tool for seeking fantasy pleasure, for finding the experience to think in different ways, and can be an aid for teaching (Sealey, 2008). Moreover, the usage of fun and entertaining films in education is functional to balance traditional teaching because learners watch them excitedly (Lenahan, et. al., 2005). Fun movies can be meant as funny, scary, or sad movies for some people. Although both its arty and benefits are goals of creating films, many films are created constantly for mass needs. However, the production of the films possesses some unknown aims so film analysis and review are required.

Films consist of diverse components to present the ultimate effect and facilitate the viewers to get the picture of the story (Niemic and Wedding, 2014). Components of films are the theme, artists, plot, pictures, movement, time, setting sound, arrangement, and lighting. However, the characters are the most noticeable parts by the viewers. The nonexistence of characters in the story is not feasible, the main character is the center of the film story (Dancyger and Cooper, 2005). The audience observes the standpoint of the main characters. Their decisions and actions determine the continuation of the story. Characters in fiction stories are various. They are found everywhere and always represent human’s trait and personality. They act, behave and talk as if they are human beings. They even provide educational information for viewers to learn a lesson. Their similarity with the reality of human personalities fascinate viewers by entering into their thinking and bringing their perspective into the characters’ point of view (Riis and Taylor, 2019). Viewers often fall in love with the characters in the movie with their mesmerizing personalities and deeply personalize them into their lives. Character means persons, animals, creatures, or things

that act in a movie. Besides that, supporting characters are also needed to complete the story. Although they are not as crucial as protagonist and antagonist, they may impact the decisions of the protagonist or antagonist. A protagonist is a chief actor who is usually a hero and has a noble character. An antagonist is a character who opposes the protagonist. The antagonist is usually a villain and has evil purposes. Then, the conflicts by the antagonist must be done and the story ends (Langer, 2012).

Another definition of character is close to moral value. Aristotle cited in Teays (2012) states that character is that which reveals moral purpose. A good movie would initiate the audience to feel fear of pity whenever the hero undergoes an unjustifiable calamity. Characters steer through dark ethical waters, struggling with adversity, being called to do the right thing, acting with integrity, facing moral dilemmas, and making decisions. According to Amstutz (2005), the word morality comes from the Latin word *mores* and refers to a widely accepting way of behavior in custom, habit, and the way of life. Likewise, moral is behaving in the right or wrong way (Welch, 2014). Furthermore, moral means something that the author wants to deliver to the readers through his works and the rules of exact manners and the righteousness or ruthlessness of a person’s personality (Nurgiyantoro, 2013). Viewers learn morals as a lesson. Morality tells viewers or readers how to behave. Viewers can conclude that the morals that can be summarized in a movie for themselves.

A value means a principle, a goal, and a viewpoint in life (Gulla, 2010). “A value can be defined as something good, interesting, and pleasing” (Bertens, 2000:139). It is the basis of our considered opinions on how to behave well and desirably (Naagarazan, 2006). Every activity requires considerations about goodness or badness, excellence or inferiority. Values in one form or another are occupied by all of these judgments. Cuddon, et. al. (2013:445) proposes that: “Moral value is the lesson to be learned from a story, poem, fable, play, or indeed any work which purports to teach anything either directly or obliquely”. It means that every work of literature has a different lesson and people have to understand what they read or what they watch. It is usually taught in the story and tells about an important life lesson. The message can be implicit by concluding the story or explicit that is clearly stated in the story through conversations or texts of the script so that the viewers can learn from it.

Moral values offer good values that can be implemented in real life. There are some forms of moral values such as

religious advice, advice, regulations, and orders. “Moral values are taught and inherited through religions such as beliefs and culture to live harmoniously and well to be a good human being” (Fajar, 2017:2). They teach us about happiness in life and how to reach it through the realization of moral values. Gulla (2010:148) also affirms that “Moral values have certain importance in judging our right and wrong reaction to a particular situation”. To pass the journey of life, these moral standards are needed to govern us. They connect to our actions to create balance and justice between persons; to control people for better the social order, and to follow our God for better relationships.

To instill moral values messages in students, a movie is an answer to learning with excitement. Every film conveys a message to the audience like morals, inspiration, faith, and science. By considering moral values, good character can be assumed to be created for the audience. Even though the film director is invisible in front of the camera, the director plays the most important role on a film set. The director is the author of the movie. A director not only directs the scenes but also executes more. He designs the visualization creatively and selects and chooses the scenes of the film. The director controls the artists, team, and other staff in movie production. Cooperation of all crew for the movie’s achievement is ensured by the director. To become a box-office great, the movie must possess an extraordinary director who has incomparable resourcefulness and superb interaction talents.

As a prolific director, Chris Renaud has compiled 14 films with 3 television series since 2001. He wrote *Robots*, *Ice Age: The Meltdown* in 2005 and 2006, *Despicable Me* (2010 & 2013), *Dr. Seuss’ The Lorax* (2012), *The Minions* (2015), *Marvel Comics*, *DC Comics*, *The Book of Pooh*, and “*The Secret Life of Pets*” (2018). One of his preeminent movies, “*The Lorax* (2012)” struck gold with the highest earnings. *Dr. Seuss: The Lorax* (2012) is adapted from *Dr. Seuss’ book*. Theodore Seuss Geisel, a well-known American author, rhymester, and illustrator has the pen-name, *Dr. Seuss*. *The Lorax* movie was produced twice. It was first published in 1972 as an animated musical television special in America. This movie was produced again by *Illumination Entertainment* in 2012. *Universal Picture* launched this movie on March, 2nd 2012, the 108th anniversary of *Dr. Seuss*. *The Lorax* tells about *Ted Wiggins*, a 12- year-old boy who lives in *Tweedville*, a walled city where everything is non-natural, with no living plants.

Characters and moral values in literature have been the subject of studies. Among other characters, the

protagonist has the most portion in the story that has noble moral values (Rizahra and Supeno, 2019) (Sastra, 2018). Lanua, et. al. (2017) reveal that moral values can be conveyed in educational values as rules to behave harmoniously in life. On the other hand, little research has explored “*The Lorax*” movie. While the findings of the three aforementioned studies revealed that moral values in the story are transmitted by the protagonist to the audience, research by Glass (2004) defines that *Once-Ler* and *The Lorax* characters influence the audience with awareness to preserve nature. Although this movie has a green theme, presented by an appealing, bright, and colorful animation with wonderful music, how characters transmit moral values are less explored. Therefore, the objective of this study is to address this gap, to investigate characters and moral values in this movie.

METHOD

A qualitative approach was used in this research. A qualitative approach involves naturalism and interpretation by exploring interior phenomena (Ritchie, et. al., 2013). Similarly, qualitative research needs practicing material to be interpreted. The data in qualitative research are notices, dialogues, recordings, messages, and pictures. Then, the data are read and analyzed to interpret them to inform people about the phenomena or results of the research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research is associated with specific kinds of data, usually involving words or images rather than numbers with the sequence of activities as follows: 1) Collecting data, 2) Analyzing data such as comparing data to find similarities and differences, grouping and categorizing data, and identifying pattern in the data, 3) Interpreting data, 4) Developing grounded theory to explain findings, 5) Writing the final research report and disseminating findings.

This present research carried out a qualitative description method. Descriptive research according to Thyer (2010) is aimed to explain features of a sample and relationships between phenomena, situations, and events studied by the researcher. Researchers do this by better understanding and measuring how variables are naturally distributed. The result is to impart data about the sample that describe fundamental relationships to boost our awareness of the questions being asked. According to Thomlison (2001), describing a comparatively new social phenomenon is the importance of the descriptive study, and the hypotheses in descriptive research concern correlations, and associations, not causality. In addition to describing characteristics of individual variables, analysis is required in the descriptive method to measure whether there are connections among variables.

The data analysis method used was content analysis. Content analysis research technique according to Krippendorff (2004) is a systematic reading of a body of texts, pictures, and symbolic subjects. Moreover, content analysis is a method of investigation to make reproducible and suitable conclusions from texts to the frameworks of their use. Steps in conducting content analysis research are: 1) Identifying problems, 2) Literature review, 3) Determining the focus/sub-focus, 4) Determining research questions, 5) Data collection, 6) Data analysis, 7) Interpretation report preparation. In this research, the data were movie scripts and scenes as visual materials. Then, the researchers took notes for the key information by classifying, categorizing, identifying, describing, understanding, and explaining these patterns and themes (Creswell, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the data found in “The Lorax” by Chris Renaud with the theory of Schmidt and Birt (2020), the characters are divided into five types.

a. The protagonist is the main driver behind the story. In other words, the protagonist needs to be in trouble, whether the protagonist makes good or bad choices are irrelevant as long as the character is relatable to the reader/watcher, this is the person we cheer for, the inner protagonist journey is what defines the theme of the story. A protagonist is a chief actor who is usually a hero and has a noble character.

Script:

Nearby, Ted, a 12-year-old boy, and our hero lands on his scooter. He looks up at Audrey worshipfully, suddenly awkward in her presence. Ted rides his scooter through the street on his way back to the door out of town. Ted interrupts The Once-ler’s story.

Analysis:

The character is dominated by the protagonist with 26% parts in the movie. The protagonist is Ted Wiggins, a 12-year-old boy who commits to getting a real tree to make his crush happy because, in his city, everything is made of plastic. Then, his journey with many blockages to find a real one is the center of this story. He must go outside the town to find the Once-ler who knows about trees.

b. Mentor, is an experienced guide that helps the protagonist, is trustworthy and is always in support of the protagonist, and inevitably teaches the protagonist something essential, often dies or disappears from the story by other means, to give the protagonist “space” to grow on his or her own.

Script:

Grammy tells Ted to meet Once-ler. Grammy Norma stands in the family room holding the seed, which now has a tiny sprout, and admiring it, mesmerized. Grammy Norma walks over with a watering can as Ted plants the seed.

Analysis:

The percentage for mentors shows at 10%. The mentor in this story is Grammy Norma. She gives clues to Ted on how to get the real tree by meeting the Once-ler. Besides, she also assists Ted to plant the trees in the center of the city. She also hides the seed in Ted’s bedroom when Mr. O-Hare is about to find it.

c. Sidekick is a faithful companion to the protagonist, assists the protagonist in reaching his or her goals, may question the protagonist from time to time to offer the reader a different perspective, helps to show off the protagonist’s soft sides. To achieve the goal, the sidekick accompanies the main character. The decision to take any action for the protagonist is influenced by the sidekick

Script:

Two yellow eyes and two green-gloved arms appear in the window. He tosses something down to Ted. Ted catches it. It’s a seed. Ted stares at it. He points a threatening finger at the Once-ler and speaks in a spooky voice as if he’s casting a spell. The Lorax looks the Once-ler right in the eyes. The Lorax. Floating back down to the stones. Smiling. The Once-ler can’t contain himself and laughs in joy. The Old Once-ler kneels and gives him a hug.

d. An antagonist is in opposition to the protagonist and a basis of their disagreements. The antagonist is usually a villain and has wicked intentions. If a protagonist has an ambition, antagonists work against it.

Script:

O’Hare turns around in his office chair and walks out from behind his desk. O’Hare, furious, gets right in Ted’s face. O’Hare moves menacingly toward Ted, the crowd following him.

Analysis:

16% is the proportion for antagonist characters. The Antagonist character is usually a bad person. This character makes conflict to prevent the protagonist from succeeding. Mr. O-Hare who is a zillionaire because of selling bottled air is the antagonist. He sells clean air for his living. After he knows that Ted wants to plant the seed, he wants to damage it because the tree will threaten his business. With his wealth, he has some guards to assist him.

e. A love interest is someone with whom the protagonist feels affection, which helps to make the protagonist more human.

Script:

Audrey, is.

Analysis:

The second-largest percentage is 20% for the sidekick. So, Ted needs them to act to reach his goal. The first sidekick is the Once-ler who tells him about his mistake in the past to destroy the environment by chopping down all trees to make his invention. He regrets his mistake and hopes Ted would not disappoint him after he asks Ted to plant the seed in the center of the city. Similarly, the other sidekick has 20% too. He is helping the Once-ler, the Lorax. The Lorax is the forest's protector and represents the feelings of the trees and animals. He has been a companion for the Once-ler.

Script:

A teenage girl, beautiful and cool, and older than Ted. Audrey looks at Ted, impressed with his take-charge attitude. Audrey leans in and surprises Ted with a kiss on the cheek. His eyes go wide. The crowd of people watches as Ted and Audrey prepare to plant the little seed into the ground.

Analysis:

The smallest percentage of characters is a love interest at 8%. Love interest character helps the main character to know his other good side that still develops. The love interest character is Audrey. She is 15 years old and feels an attraction to a genuine tree and she informs Ted about it. When finally Ted has got the seed, She helps to plant it. Audrey makes Ted love nature too.

Based on the theory of Gulla (2010), and after analyzing the data found in "The Lorax" by Chris Renaud, there are 11 proportions of moral values.

a. Kindness is an act of altruistic service to help someone or to encourage somebody.

Script:

The Lorax has saved the Once-ler.

Analysis:

The Once-ler has been saved by the Lorax. The Lorax has the act of kindness. It can be concluded that the moral value is kindness.

b. Commitment is a vow or oath to do something in the future.

Script:

Ted comes out into the world outside of town. It's a desolate landscape. He's seeing his world as it is. And it's a nightmare. Filled with garbage and filthy water and tree stumps. Ted steels himself and continues past the graveyard of tree stumps.

Analysis:

Ted encouraged himself to go out of town. Although it seems creepy and unsafe, he has a determination to commit what Audrey wants. So, he commits to getting the tree for her. He does it to make her happy without thinking this journey might endanger him. From the analysis above, it can be concluded that he has a good commitment to keep his promise to bring Audrey the real tree.

c. Love.

The sparkle that relates us to the Ultimate and its universe is Love.

Script:

A little boy swims through the Thneedville river wearing a smile. His parents happily help him out of the river and give him a big hug.

Analysis:

Although he is different because his body is green, his parents love him. They hug and help him to swim. From the analysis above, it can be concluded that his parents love him.

d. Honesty

Honesty is about relationships' maintenance and cultured life.

Script:

Lorax:" I didn't mean you any harm! I just wanted to calmly float you away. Look, everyone here needs the trees. And you're choppin 'em down. So we've got a big problem."

Analysis:

The 'Lorax' tells the truth. All animals need trees. They eat and sleep on the trees. If there's no tree, no living creature survives. It can be concluded that moral value is truthfulness and honesty.

e. Respect for others

Respect for others is probable merely with self-esteem.

Script:

Once-ler:" But—

Once-ler's mom:" No buts, Once. You're running a business now. You have to do what's best for the company. And your Momma"

Once-ler:" Well, I guess it couldn't hurt to chop down a few trees." The Once-ler's Mom hugs him through the window.

Analysis:

The Once-ler has promised not to chop down another tree anymore. But, his family keeps persuading him to chop down more trees. Then, he obeys them. It happens because he is an obedient son and respects them, especially his mom. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the Once-ler respects and loves them.

f. Integrity

Integrity is an inner system of main beliefs which leads our behavior.

Script:

The animals watch as he collects some rocks and stacks them on the stump, creating a memorial. Pipsqueak Sees This. He brings over a rock and offers it to the Lorax. Other animals join him.

Analysis:

After the Once-ler chops down a tree, The Lorax appears and creates a memorial by collecting some rocks and stacking them on the stump. The Lorax is kind and feels sad about the tree. Pipsqueak understands and tolerates him by bringing a rock for The Lorax. Then, all animals have the same integrity to nod their heads for a while and pray together. They feel compassion towards the tree and they are kind to have a ceremony for the tree. It can be concluded that all animals show integrity.

g. Sacrifice is being ready to surrender something good for something better.

Script:

Ted stops at a large ravine where a bridge is out. He looks around to see if there is another way to cross and spots some old barrels and a plank of wood. He gets an idea. In front of him lies a large ravine.

Analysis:

He may get hurt crossing it. He could go back and consider his safety. But, he commits to finding a real tree, he finds a way out. He sacrifices himself for her. It can be concluded that Ted sacrifices himself for her.

h. Compassion is human emotion driven by the pain of others.

Script:

Lorax:” Whoa! Stop right there! Stop it! So you’d hammer one of nature’s innocent creatures?” The Lorax pats Pipsqueak on the head and he happily runs off-screen.

Analysis:

The Lorax is sad if The Once-ler hammers Pipsqueak. So, he saves him from The Once-ler. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that The Lorax has kindness and compassion.

i. Telling the truth is considered a noble virtue and everyone declares himself to stand by the truth.

Script:

Ted:” Me? Why would he leave that for me?”
Once-ler:” Because unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

Analysis:

The Once-ler now knows the reason why the Lorax leaves the word ‘unless’. The reason is Ted. Then, Ted does not understand it. The Once-ler explains that only Ted, who really cares a lot about trees, can make a change. It can be concluded that the Once-ler says the truth.

j. Tolerance is harmony in diversity.

Script:

Once-ler:” Hey, yeah, no, ah, no. No, didn’t sell it. Turns out it’s ahead of its time, I guess.”

Lorax:” Hey, you gave it your best shot, right? What more can you do? Come on, take a seat, we’ll deal you in.”

Analysis:

The Lorax asks the Once-ler whether he has sold the Thneed. It seems that nobody buys it. The Lorax tries to comfort him by asking him to play cards. The Lorax tolerates him who is not successful in selling the Thneed. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the Lorax tolerates the Once-ler and the Once-ler is honest.

k. Sincerity is the secret to fostering a true feeling of love.

Script:

Ted looks up at the Once-ler, deep thought. Get a determined look. His fist closes around the seed. Ted nods. Then walks over to his scooter and starts it up.

Ted:” (calls out) I won’t let you down.”

Analysis:

The Once-ler gives the last Truffula seed to Ted because he has a hope that Ted can change the way people think about trees. Ted also has many feelings mixed in his heart. He falls in love with Audrey and he cares about trees. He sacrifices himself to get a real tree and commits to getting it sincerely. He is kind and respectful to others. It can be concluded that this part has a moral value: sincerity.

Moral values are kindness 18,7%, commitment 17,6%, love 14,7%, honesty 12,7%, respect for others 9,8%, integrity 4,9%, sacrifice 4,9%, compassionate 4,9%, truthfulness 4,9%, tolerance 3,9% and sincerity 3%.

It is clear that kindness represents the largest number of character percentage with 18,7 %. Most of the characters in this movie are helpful and eager to help others. Starting from Ted as the main role tries hard to get a real tree for Audrey and helps the Once-ler to plant the seed and changes the way people think about the environment. Grammy Norma and his mommy always support and encourage Ted to plant the seed. Next, the Once-ler regrets his past and now realizes how bad he was when he

damaged the environment and made all animals gone. Then, he acts kindness by giving Ted a seed of Truffula tree. He hopes that Ted can fix the Once-ler's mistake and learn from him. The Lorax is also very kind. He is ready to hand when someone is in need. He even does not get angry when the Once-ler cut all trees because of his greediness and selfishness. He just feels sad and talks to Once-ler. Another character is Audrey who wants to see a real tree and she is helping Ted to plant it.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the characters in "The Lorax" by Chris Renaud are divided into five types. The protagonist has the most fractions with 26%. Sidekick has the second-highest level at 20%. Another sidekick represents the same 20% of the total. The antagonist's share of showing in this story is 16%. The following percentage is 10% for mentors and the smallest group in terms of character is a love interest at 8%. In addition to character, there are 11 proportions of moral values in this movie. They are kindness 18,7%, commitment 17,6%, love 14,7%, honesty 12,7%, respect for others 9,8%, integrity 4,9%, sacrifice 4,9%, compassionate 4,9%, truthfulness 4,9%, tolerance 3,9% and sincerity 3%.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, the writers would like to express gratitude to Allah SWT. Almighty for His blessings the researcher could accomplish in writing this research. The writers owe a deep debt of gratitude to many people for their assistance in the development of this research. Sincerest appreciation goes to Prof. Dr. H. Sumaryoto for his encouragement and support in the role of dissertation chairman and material advisor. A special note of appreciation is given to Dr. Mamiek Suendarti as a technical advisor for her invaluable support. In addition, gratitude is extended to Dr. Gustaman Saragih for his course during the thesis proposal. Without their help, it would not have been possible for me to complete my research. My deepest appreciation must be given to my family, for their patience, support, understanding, and encouragement during the past two years. Also, to my daughter, for her willingness to sacrifice those special things that mothers do with their children. Finally, Appreciation is also expressed to my colleagues at class 2O Indraprasta PGRI University, especially Lia Unindra Group who encouraged and assisted me in many ways.

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