Research Article

THE CHARACTER AND MORAL VALUE IN "LES MISERABLES" BY VICTOR HUGO

Neindisa Radike[1]
Merry Lapasau [2]
Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jakarta.
e-mail: disaneindisa@gmail.com [1]
e-mail: merry.lapasau@unindra.ac.id [2]

Abstract: The purpose of this analysis is to discover the novel's character and moral values. The method used in the research is qualitative that aims to describe the character and moral value in the novel "Les Miserables." The writer did several steps to extract the data by reading a whole book carefully, categorizing the characters and kinds of moral values, and creating tables based on the specifications of character and moral values. The findings reveal that there are several characters and moral values presented themselves explicitly. This novel has two objectives: explaining the novel's characters and analyzing moral value in the novel. 1) One of the more dominant characters is the lover. The value of lover reaches 18.5 % because this novel shows more about love and compassion. 2) Moral values in "Les Miserables" show four moral values: love and sincerity, forgiveness, sacrifice, and justice/injustice. Love and sincerity are more dominant than the other elements. The value of love and sincerity reach 42% because it shows more about love and sincerity.
Keywords: Character, Moral value, Novel.

Introduction

Language is a medium of communication to express what people think, opinions, ideas, and feelings. The communication that happened around people must be said clearly so that others can understand. Moreover, people can also create literary works using the language; it can be spoken, or written form, usually called literature. We cannot separate our lives from literature, which is part of human beings' art to express their ideas or emotions. Literature has been developed for a long time ago. The development of literature grows up with the development of human culture itself. People create literature in order to express their ideas and emotions. Whenever we talk about literature, we directly deal with human life. It concerns a whole range of human life and activities.

Literature is a branch of art that is a verbal art dealing with human life, activities, and experience using words as its medium. It is created to be enjoyed, understood, and utilized by the community and the author as a social creation. Goodman (1996, p. 7) mentions that the literature includes forms of writing deliberately and creatively experimented with language to suggest images and ideas that engage the readers' imagination. Literature can be said as creative writing by an author with aesthetic values, which makes literature regarded as an art. As a branch of art, it can be divided into fiction and nonfiction.

Fiction is one of the most interesting and profitable forms of literature. It is a kind of composition written by a writer based on his/her imagination. It includes poetry, prose, and drama. On the other hand, nonfiction is a kind of composition written by a writer based on fact. It includes essays, criticism, biographies, daily notes, and histories.

Nevertheless, literature is an overflow or realization of thought and feeling and the author's experiences. Literature is from daily human life, whether it happens to the author or other people's experiences. Because literature is a portrait of human life, imaginatively or in accordance with thought and experiences. Literature is a human expression psych. It applies truth; human feelings are fear, anger, disgust, joy, sorrow, and disappointment.

In understanding literature, not only rely on knowledge and experience, but also full and total comprehension. By having specific knowledge about something or some events, the reader will judge

specific literary works observed depending on their prior knowledge and experiences. Literature is the art of written work that needs full and total comprehension. They help the reader make a judgment whether a literary work is good or not. Novel, short story, poem, drama, and song are some examples of literary works.

Literary work is the writer's expression of life and livings. It is combined with the power of imagination and creativity that are supported by experience and observation. Klarer (2013, p. 1) says, in most cases, The whole of written speech is referred to as literary work, with the drawback that not every written text can be classified as literature in the more precise sense of the term. It is all facts of human concern, emotions, behaviors, and dreams. The definitions usually include additional adjectives such as "aesthetic" or "artistic" to distinguish literary works from everyday use texts such as telephone books, newspapers, legal documents, and scholarly writings. So, literary work is literary as a work of imaginative or creative writing. A literary work offering universal moral values is generally accepted its truth as universal and allow it to be a sublime work, although the other intrinsic elements also determine it. The moral is a fundamental rule enforced in a society because it can be a sign in life and protect the community itself. Moral behavior has resulted from intellectual, emotional, or intuitive thinking of everyone who is ultimately accepted as a rule to appreciate and distinguish between right and wrong prevailing in a society. Moral values indicate rules of behavior and customs of an individual from a group that includes behavior. There are three major types of literary work, such as poetry, drama, and fiction.

Meanwhile, fiction can also be divided into novels and short stories. As one of literary works, the novel includes several elements that are essentially focused on human quality of life. On the other hand, the synthesis of the author's imagination and real-life experiences is a book.

Every novel was created with its purpose. The purposes of the novel in real life are to entertain and give benefit to its readers. We could get knowledge, entertainment, information, and messages by reading the novel. A moral value is one kind of message that the author generally offers to his readers to convey throughout the literary works. Literary works have a close relationship with moral value. The author's moral is something to be conveyed to the reader; that is the meaning of a literary work—values or moral values play an essential role in an intrinsic element in the story. The moral principles are defined in the novel through the characters' attitudes and actions, whether the characters have good or bad behavior. Thus, moral value usually appears in a literary work. It usually reflects the author's view of life is concerned. Therefore, the moral has a close relationship with a work of literature, in which the literary works always contain a moral value that will be delivered.

Character can be divided into main character, supporting character, protagonist, and antagonist, neutral character. Because of the position and the value of each character, these groups may be categorized. It is also possible to understand each character's distinctions based on the strength of his presence in the story. The reader will select some characters to place compassion and empathy when reading a fictional story, such as the novel. Usually, these characters reflect the same desires, aspirations, and thoughts as the reader. In other words, the readers are represented by these characters. Such characters are named characters of the protagonist. The main character is typically the one in the story who faces a conflict.

Some characters will have the function of having a conflict with the characters of the protagonist. These characters are classified as characters with antagonisms. For the protagonists, the antagonist characters are usually the opposing characters in a fictional plot. In the plot, the antagonists will be the ones who establish a conflict. However, in certain instances, the conflict is not created individually by an antagonist character, but by other factors such as accident, natural disaster, and moral value. These causes of conflict that are not personally caused by a character are called antagonistic powers.

Most simply, a character is one of the people who appear in the play, a dramatic personal. Therefore, the characters in the story have a different character. A character with has a vital character story is called the main character. In contrast, a character that's character is less critical because her/his play completely, to support, to work with the main character only. It is called a minor character or a supporting character.

The novel develops a theme that is one of the best ways to express moral and social thought. By using prominent pictures of its time guides us to perceive that we comprehend its setting. It invites us that we have lived in it. The moral is a human's life seen from the good sides by humans. The norms of morals are the parameter of determining good or bad human's behavior. As one of the novel's essential elements, moral values also play an important role in our daily lives. Moral values are our guideline to decide which

is right and wrong. Therefore, we need to learn moral values to be human beings with quality useful for the surrounding community.

Method

The approach used in this research is qualitative. In qualitative research, the researcher addresses research problems where the variables are unknown and require exploration. Scientific writing should have a certain kind of method to analyze the problem that is taken. In this research, the writer used the qualitative method. It includes descriptive research, in which most of the data were collected in the form of words. In qualitative research, the researcher is the main instrument to gather all the required data by applying the theories, interpreting the data by searching the moral values, and making the conclusion based on data analysis. The data are categorized into how the author conveyed moral values through this novel's main character. The key concept, idea, or process studied in this type of research is a central phenomenon. This type of research views something as a central phenomenon that is required to be explored and understood.

Apart from its relation to uninominal data analysis, qualitative research has six chief characteristics, as suggested by Creswell (2009). The first is that to roam an issue and develop a keen understanding of a central phenomenon. Then, it will entail the literature review that plays a minor role in justifying the problem. According to the participants' experiences, the third characteristic is determining the objective and research questions in a general and vast way. After that, it draws data based on words from a small number of individuals to gain the participants' views. The data is analyzed for description using text analysis and interpreting the larger meaning of the findings. The last is that this kind of research will reveal the report using flexible, emerging structures and evaluative criteria and even the researchers' subjective reflexivity.

Moreover, what it means by qualitative is that the data will be processed (collected, analyzed, interpreted) qualitatively in the form of words or symbols. This type of study needs grounded theory as a foundation to start and then to reconstruct. The method used in assessing the "Les Miserables" (Hugo, 2008) is a qualitative descriptive method. The research methods research that the findings are not obtained through statistical procedures or others. The researcher applies this method to help her explains the whole material. Qualitative describes something, determines the existing conditions, and analyzes the research findings without drawing a generalized conclusion.

The qualitative descriptive method aims to obtain in-depth data and close reading of the text, and data contains the meaning. The meaning is the actual data, definitive data, which is a value beyond the data that appears. Therefore, a qualitative study does not emphasize generalizations yet concentrates more on the meaning to express a variety of qualitative information with detailed and nuanced descriptions to describe the properties of the case (individual or group), the state of the phenomenon accurately. It is not restricted to data collection but preferably includes the analysis and interpretation. Descriptive assessment advised on the assessment is made solely based on the fact or phenomenon that empirically lives in its speakers (writer). This means that recorded and analyzed are elements in literary works as it is.

Results and Discussion

a. Characters in "Les Miserables."

One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that the researcher has the right to be the observer. In this novel, many characters will be presented, as follow:

1) **Jean Valjean a.k.a Monsieur Madeleine a.k.a M. Leblanc**
    a. Late forties, medium height, broad-shouldered, and strong (p. 1)
    b. He was a thief
    c. Kind and Helpful (Pg. 16)
    d. Humble (Pg. 15)
    e. Brave (Pg. 19)
    f. Smart (Pg. 15)
    g. Religious (Pg. 20)
2) **Fantine (Cosette's mother)**
    a. Pretty/beautiful and poor (Pg. 10, 13-14)
    b. Loves Cosette (Pg. 14)
3) **Cosette a.k.a Euphrasie a.k.a Mlle. Lanoire**

a. Pretty/Beautiful (Pg. 34)
b. Loves Marius (Pg. 56)
4) **The Bishop of Digne (Bishop Myriel)**
Kind and Humble (Pg. 3)
5) **Thenardiers a.k.a Jondrette**
a. Cruel (Pg. 23)
b. Greedy (Pg. 12)
c. Liar (Pg. 26)
6) **Inspector Javert**
a. Abrupt (Pg. 21)
b. Bad person (Pg. 21)
c. Poor (Pg. 82)
7) **Marius**
a. Handsome (Pg. 40)
b. Shy (Pg. 33)
c. Loves reading (Pg. 33)
d. Kind/loves Cosette (Pg. 57)
8) **Eponine (Thernadiers' elder daughter)**
a. Brave (Pg. 74)
b. Loves Marius
9) **M. Gillenormand (Marius's Grandfather)**
a. Wealthy/Rich (Pg. 32)
b. Old man and unhappy (Pg. 58)
10) **Pontmercy (Marius's Father)**
Brave and loves his family (Pg. 32)
11) **Enjolras (Marus's best friend)**
Kind and Brave (Pg. 72)
12) **Petit-Gervais**
A boy about ten years old (Pg. 8)

Based on the data above, it concludes that the total of all elements of characters is 27. The lover is more dominant than the other characters. The value for lovers reaches 18.5% because it shows more about love and compassion, which is the essential goal in life. The second is kind and brave; both of them reach a percentage of 14.8%. Next, four elements have the same percentages: humble, beautiful, bad, and helpful, they reach a percentage of 7.4%, and the last is rich, shy, poor, religious, smart, and handsome that reach 3.7%.

b. Moral Values in "Les Miserables."
Moral values in the novel "Les Miserables" are love and sincerity, forgiveness, Sacrifice, Justice/Injustice.
1) **Love and Sincerity**
Fantine earned less and less money from her sewing, and the Thenardiers demanded more and more money to look after Cosette. Because she had solved her hair and her teeth, she decided that she had no other choice: she would have to sell herself. It concludes that love and sincerity are the most important gifts one person can give another, and displaying these qualities should be a fundamental goal in life.
2) **Forgiveness**
After stealing valuables from a church, Jean Valjean is forgiven. Not only does the priest forgive him, but he offers him more opportunities to start a new life, a healthy life with social activities that benefit other people. This gesture of being offered a second chance hits Jean. He takes advantage of this chance and becomes the fine man the priest wished to become by helping the poor. Through forgiveness and not by retribution, he is changed.
3) **Sacrifice**
Jean worries that he will lose his adopted daughter to a man for whom she has fallen. He tries to run and hide her from her suitor when he finds out. However, he reads a love letter from the young man and

knows that his daughter deserves a love opportunity, a chance he has never had. Then to save his daughter's boyfriend, he sacrifices his life. The one who was shot in the revolt. He does this knowing that he will lose her to him, but more important is her happiness. Forgiveness is never an easy task because we have that a person who did us wrong.

4) **Justice/Injustice**

Indeed, the punishment of Jean Valjean and pursuance by Javert seems grossly unfair. Valjean questions "whether human society had the right to? Grind a poor man between the milestones of need and excess-need of work and excess of punishment. Valjean develops a disdain for the government and society and believes that his treatment is unjust. Fantine also faces an inequitable fate when by the statute, she seeks to redress. There is justice for the powerful, and there is justice for the poor as well. When he discovers that he has followed the man who has saved his life, this unfair framework triggers Javert's suicide. All he lived for was a satire of an ideal that never really existed.

The explanation above concludes that the total of all elements of moral values is 12. Love and sincerity are more dominant than the other elements. The value of love and sincerity reach a 42% percentage because it shows more about love and sincerity. The second is sacrifice, and justice/injustice, both of them reaches 25%. The last one is forgiveness, and it only reaches 8%.

Conclusions

The character is one of the elements of literary work. It is the figure contained in the literature that has personality, values, moral and mental. The characters must live; it naturally has an element of thought or feeling that can form fictional characters convincing that readers feel as if dealing with a real human. Therefore, the character is representative and the description of personal qualities in real life.

In the novel "Les Miserables" by Victor Hugo, there are many types of characters: lover, kind, humble, brave, beautiful, handsome, bad person, helpful, smart, religious, poor, shy, and rich. Each type of character describes All characters in "Les Miserables." The total of all elements of characters is 27. The lover is more dominant than the other characters. The lover's value reaches 18.5 % because this novel shows more about love and compassion. The second is kind and brave; both of them reach 14.8%. Next, there are four elements with the same percentages: humble, beautiful, bad, and helpful, they reach 7.4%, and the last is rich, shy, poor, religious, smart, and handsome, reaching 3.7%.

Every literature offers a moral message, especially in this novel. There are four moral value types: love and sincerity, forgiveness, sacrifice, and justice/injustice. The total of all elements of moral values is 12. Love and sincerity are more dominant than the other elements. The value of love and sincerity reach 42% because it shows more about love and sincerity. The second is sacrifice, and justice/injustice, both of them reaches 25%. The last one is forgiveness, and it only reaches 8%. The data of character and moral value concludes that every aspect of the novel has several values.

The writer suggests the other researchers who intend to analyze "Les Miserables" about the characters more specifically. Maybe the researchers can discover the character's development that happened to the main character, Jean Valjean. He used to be a bad man; in the end, he becomes a good man. The other suggestion is to make a further study from a different view of human relationships.

The writer suggests the teachers apply the novel in teaching reading for the students, such as "Les Miserables." The "Les Miserables," also well-known literature work, can be the primary source in teaching-learning activities. Using literature, students' vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar mastery can be improved as well as the four language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The novel "Les Miserables" can be used as teaching material in reading skill. The writer believes that learning the story through reading skills can improve the students' vocabulary. It is a literature study, and the students can learn how the author describes all the characters. Besides the characters, the students can also discuss plot, setting, and moral values to improve the knowledge of history while improving the students' vocabularies.

References

Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Approaches (3rd Edition). In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (3rd ed.). https://doi.org/10.2307/1523157

Goodman, L. (1996). *Literature and gender*. Routledge.

Hugo, V. (2008). *Les miserables* (A. Kurnia (trans.)). Bentang Pustaka.

Klarer, M. (2013). An introduction to literary studies. In *An Introduction to Literary Studies*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203068915