

An Analysis of Characterization of John Forbes Nash in the Novel of “A Beautiful Mind” by Sylvia Nasar

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Abstract

This research was conducted to describe the characterization of John Forbes Nash as the main character of the Novel “A Beautiful Mind” by Sylvia Nasar. This research used the descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive qualitative method used the data in the form of words. The technique of collecting data of this research was the documentation method based on the data used of this research consisting of all of the expressions, utterances, or dialogs describing the main character John Forbes Nash. The researcher used theories of Roberts about ways to analyze the characterization of the main character in the novel. The results of this research showed that the researcher found 3 ways of characterization. There are (1) The figure of speech used by the author, (2) The behavior of the characters described, and (3) The conversation between the characters described.

Keywords: Characterization, The main character, Novel *A Beautiful Mind*

Introduction

The literature is a socially purposive discursive activity (sign practicing and organizing) that we suppose to serve some specifiable roles within the totality of different discursive practices composing

what we call society (and how any society understands itself) (Reis, 1992:1). A literature also contains several elements; they are intrinsic elements and extrinsic elements. There are some aspects of intrinsic

elements. One intrinsic element is a character.

Character is an important element or aspect in intrinsic element. Especially in novels, characters in literature are created by authors to convey their ideas and feelings about something that is happening in this world. The character has the power to dominate the whole story in a literature. To present the character of literature there is a way called the characterization. The characterization is the hallmark of fictional forms such as short stories, novels, drama, and narrative poetry (Grolier, 1977:291). When we read a novel, there will be feelings and seeing stories about the lives of each character in the novel.

When the author writes a novel, he will not only cause feelings of pleasure to the reader but also convey a message about the events and actions of the people the character in the novel. The author describes that everyone has difference in character, such as temperamental, feeling of belonging or sense of humor.

The Character is important because character is the foundation of building a quality nation. With the character of state officials will not eat public money for personal gain. With the character of a teacher can pass on his knowledge properly and correctly without expecting a reply. In education, characterization also is very important because to know and

understand the character of a student, the teacher must be able to master the characterization. Moreover, now in curriculum K.13, the character is mainly emphasized on characterization. Therefore, characterization is very important to be applied in education for the success of the K.13 curriculum. Someone is said to have character if his behavior is in accordance with moral and religious values. To analyze the characterization, there is some media used by the researchers. One media used by the researchers is a novel.

The researcher interests to analyze the characterization of the A Beautiful Mind novel because the theme of this novel is not only about love but also about the struggling of a genius

mathematician named John Forbes Nash, who succeeded in creating economic concepts that are now used as the basis of economic theory. Nash is a simple man from the village of Virginia described as a loner, shy, inferior, introverted and strange at the same time.

When the researcher read and chose this novel, the author was interested in the main characters John Forbes Nash and Alicia Lard (Nash's wife). These two characters are interesting characters. They bring readers in the events that they experienced and other changes in other lives.

The researcher focuses more on research on the main character of John Forbes Nash in the novel A Beautiful Mind. Nash's way of thinking about mathematics is

different from scientists in general. And Nash's character according to the author has its own uniqueness. This is what makes this novel worthy of being read and becoming the best-selling novel of the century. A Beautiful Mind novel is a work that is not enough to be enjoyed, but needs to get a scientific response.

Based on the reasons above, the researcher is interested to conduct the research entitled "An Analysis of Characterization of John Forbes Nash in the Novel A Beautiful Mind by Sylvia Nasar".

Based on the background of the problems above, the researcher formulates the problem of this research as

follows: How is the characterization of John Forbes Nash as the main character of the Novel "A Beautiful Mind" by Sylvia Nasar.

Review of Related Literature

Literature is the expression of society, therefore the emergence of a literary work closely related to the problems that emerged at the time. This suggests that social issues do have a strong influence on literary forms. In other words the literary work is a reflection of a person's relationship with others or with society. Literature is able to form personal characters personally, and finally can also be social. Literature is capable of functioning as a human awareness of its presence which is meaningful for life for the

creator or in front of his fellow human.

Novels are expressions and images of human life in an age that is faced with various problems of life. From complex human life problems can create a conflict and a dispute. Semi (1993: 32) states that the novel expresses a concentration of life at a time of tension and a firm concentration of life. Novel is a work of fiction that reveals the aspects of humanity more deeply and presented with a smooth.

According to Herman. J. W. (2002: 165) states that the term characterization here means the author's way of displaying his characters, the relationship of the characters with other stories, and how the author describes the character. Edgar V. Roberts in

Writing Themes about Literature (1983: 41) stated that there were four ways to analyze characterization.

1. From the character's words about him.
2. The style of language or figure of speech used by the author.
3. From the behavior or actions of the characters described by the author in the novel.
4. From the conversation between the characters described by the author.

Method

This research is qualitative descriptive because the research is in the form of the word, find theory and based on assumption. Research design, qualitative research is a research

whose data is described with rich descriptions and explanations. According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975) in the book Moleong (2004:3) using the qualitative method as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of words or oral from the people and behavior that can be observed.

To collect the data, the researchers will do the following steps:

1. Reading the novel of A Beautiful Mind as needed.
2. Understanding the context and checking the data.
3. Identifying the language expressions, utterances, or dialogs describing the main character John Forbes Nash.

4. Analyzing and interpreting the data found in the novel
5. Clarify the data found in the novel
6. Drawing the conclusion.

Result And Discussion

Based on the data examined in this research, the researcher found the identified characters by John Forbes Nash. The findings were revealed that John is categorized as the person who is introverted, indifferent, arrogance, eccentric, ambitious and brilliant in mathematics.

The researcher discussed the characterization of John Forbes Nash applied as the main character of the Novel "A Beautiful Mind" by Sylvia Nasar. All of the data in the novel were examined by the researcher in order to answer the research question

formulated. The characterization of the main character in the novel used in the data of this study was examined based on the theories of Roberts (1983) and Herman (2002) and the interpretations of the research findings by related theories and some previous studies.

“He was a singular little boy, solitary, and introverted. The once-dominant view of the origins of the schizoid temperament was that abuse, neglect, or abandonment caused the child to give up the possibility of gratification from human relationships at a very early age.” (46)

Based on the quotation mentioned, the researcher inferred that as a young person, John is very introvert one although he is brought up in a loving family surrounded by close relations. His parents also show him much warmth on him as the beloved son. John also shows the symptoms of being a true-lonely boy in his childhood. It can be identified

by his manners. As stated by Murphy (in (Aryanti, 2008, p. 45), “Identification of someone’s personality can be judged through his or her mannerism and habits”. Thus, it is clearly stated that as a true-lonely boy, John does not like playing with someone else even his parents and his sister namely Martha.

As it is seen in the data below:

“But by the time John was seven or eight; his aunts had come to consider him bookish and slightly odd. While Martha and her cousins rode stick horses, cut paper dolls out of old pattern books, and played hose and hide-and-seeK in the “almost scary and buried in a book or magazine”. (47)

The data above shows that John is identified as a Lonely-boy. Even though John likes to play by himself, he is busy in his activity without somebody next to him. John also ignores the neighborhood children by preferring to stay indoors alone. He was interested in books

when he was young but little interest in playing with other children in his environment. It is not because of lack of childhood friends that he behaves as the way he was but John mostly preferred playing by himself with toy airplanes and matchbox cars.

By knowing John's character which is identified as a lonely boy, his parents seem to unintentionally control his loner attitude by bringing him to get an education as well as the wish of his parents that John could be able to make relationships with his friends in his childhood. Virginia, his mother, responds by enthusiastically encouraging John's education by making sure that he gets good learning at school and also teaching him herself. Meanwhile, John's father, called as John Sr., also reacts toward his wife by treating John like an adult by providing him

science book when other parents may give their children either coloring book or even drawing book as their age normally. By treating him as this way, his parents hope that John builds his character as an independent boy. Typically, John does not like to depend himself to others neither his sister nor his parents who did love and care about him as a family. At that time, John's best friends were books. He was happy as always learning on his own.

"At school, Johnny's immaturity and social awkwardness were initially more apparent than any special intellectual gifts. His teachers labeled him an underachiever." (48)

As a student, John also shows his indifferent attitude with others. Thus, the teachers at school certainly do not recognize his genius. His teachers assume that John has a serious problem in social skills. By knowing this condition, John was

labeled by his teachers as a backward student. Moreover, John always gets bored at school. By the time at his age at twelve years old, he starts showing great talent as he is interested in carrying out scientific experiments in his room at home. It is exactly clear that he learns more at his home and he does what he has learnt at school. Dealing with his unusual childhood attitude, his parents keeps on encouraging him to involve in social activities. By this motivation, John joins some activities such as sports, dances, visits to relatives and other social activities.

“In high school, Nash became friendly-though not close friends with a couple of fellow students, John William and John Louthan, both sons of Bluefield College Professors.” (59)

Moreover, the first hint of John’s skill at math comes in his fourth grade at school. Coming from

the situation happened at his class, when the teacher tells Virginia, one of his classmates, that the boy could not do the math to solve the simple problem in math, she laughs. By that time, John solves his teacher’s awkward proof in just a few elegant steps. John shows his brilliant when he becomes one of ten nationally awarded winners of the George Westinghouse Award which provides him with full scholarship to the Carnegie Institute of Technology. At that time, he took mathematics courses as well as science courses. In a particular studying chemistry, science was a favorite topic. From those past of his stories, it can be said that John is considered as a brilliant and indifferent boy.

John also determined as the ambition boy. Although he has no close companion, he enjoys

performing in front of people. He always keeps on asking his mother many questions related to electricity, geology, weather, astronomy, other technological subjects and natural world. He spends most of his time by thinking. In his grow up time, he keeps on searching the answer of every question that comes up in his mind. Consequently, it shows that he is deliberated to be an ambitious person regardless he is known as an odd person. In line with Murphy (in Aryanti, 2008, p. 47) claimed that “A person’s character can be recognized from his or her various situations and conditions as his or her reacts”.

“He caricatured classmates he disliked with weird little cartoons. He later told a fellow mathematician at MIT that, as a youngster, he had sometimes “enjoyed torturing animals.” He once constructed a Tinkertoy rocking chair, wired it electrically, and tried to get Martha to sit in it. He played a similar prank on a neighboring child.” (57)

Based on the quotation above, it shows when John interacts with his peers, his weirdness is also shown up. John describes the situation of his study. As he quickly aspired to great things in mathematics, he took the William Lowell Putnam Mathematics Competition twice even though he did not make the top five. It became a failure in John’s eyes and the situation make him taking badly. Furthermore, despite his weirdness, his ambition has led him to pursue his dream. He received a BA and an MBA in mathematics in 1948. By the time, he had been accepted into the mathematics program as Harvard, Chicago and Michigan. He felt that Harvard was the leading university and he wanted to go there. Meanwhile, his offer was less generous than that of Princeton.

Thinking about the prestigious fellowship that Princeton had, John made decision to study there.

John also reveals his big ambition when he issued his paper “The Bargaining Problem”. He wants to prove that his ambition comes with the right expectation. He intentionally tries to beat his professors in Princeton called John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern. First time, they have issued one of the finest work of arts that have ever been issued namely “The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior”.

“To an ambitious young mathematician like Nash, the gaps and flaws in von Neumann’s theory were as alluring as the puzzling absence of ether through which light waves were supposed to travel was to the young Einstein. Nash immediately began thinking about the problem that von Neumann and Morgenstern described as the most important test of the new theory.” (132)

Although John’s effort is considered as the impolite action, “The Bargaining Problem” eventually has corrected the weakness of “The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior”. But, in this case, John takes that his theory is not perfectly arranged as he begins to think for the possible solution to make it fixed.

Moreover, John’s ambition, brilliance and oddness have supported by his arrogance when he was in Princeton. It begins when he starts to smug the class discussion and underestimate his friends. The first-year students are extremely arrogant bunch, but John immediately strikes everyone as a good deal cocker and stranger. His appearance helps to create the impression. The arrogance is also elaborated on his being eccentric. He

does not care about the habit that all this time college students learn through lectures. Whereas, he gets his own faith that he could be able to learn from another way and it becomes one of his reasons to keep ignoring his lectures.

As considered that John is an arrogant young, through his personal description, the author emphasized his character as seen in the data in this study that some fellow students put comments of his being arrogant.

“Nash was out of the ordinary. If he was in room with twenty people, and they were talking, if you asked an observer who struck you as odd it would have been Nash. It was not anything he consciously did. It was his bearing. His aloofness. Nash was totally spooky. He wouldn’t look at you. He’d take a lot of time answering a question. If he thought the question was foolish he wouldn’t answer at all. He had no effect. It was a mixture of pride and something else. He was so isolated but there really was underneath it all a warmth and appreciation of people. A lot of us would discount what Nash said. ... I wouldn’t want to listen. You didn’t feel comfortable with the person.” (110)

From the quotation based on his friends’ opinion and the way he reacts, it proves that his arrogant character. It is supported from his statement mentioned as viewed “...*I wouldn’t want to listen.*” Moreover, his arrogant can be viewed in the quotation below:

“His arrogance was seen as evidence of his genius, and so as his eccentricity, a source of both amusement and grudging respect, the other side of the genius coins, as it were.” (215)

Based on the descriptions among the data mentioned, it can be stated that overall, John Forbes Nash’s characteristics become more understandable and clear that he is described as genius, indifferent, introverted, ambitious, a brilliant young mathematics and also an arrogant man. The author used the description of the main characters in the novel by identification of the

style of language or figure of speech used by the author, the behavior or actions of the characters described by the author and the conversation between the characters.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion in the previous chapters carried out by the researcher, the researcher with this draw conclusion as follows, the researcher found three characterizations for John Forbes Nash as the main character in the novel "A Beautiful Mind" by Sylvia Nasar. The researcher found 9 data supporting the identification of characterization applied to the main character in the novel "A Beautiful Mind". Those results of the identification were categorized into three namely: (1) The figure of speech used by author containing 2

data, (2) The behavior or actions of the characters described by the author in the novel containing 6 data, and (3) The conversation between the characters described by the author containing 1 datum.

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